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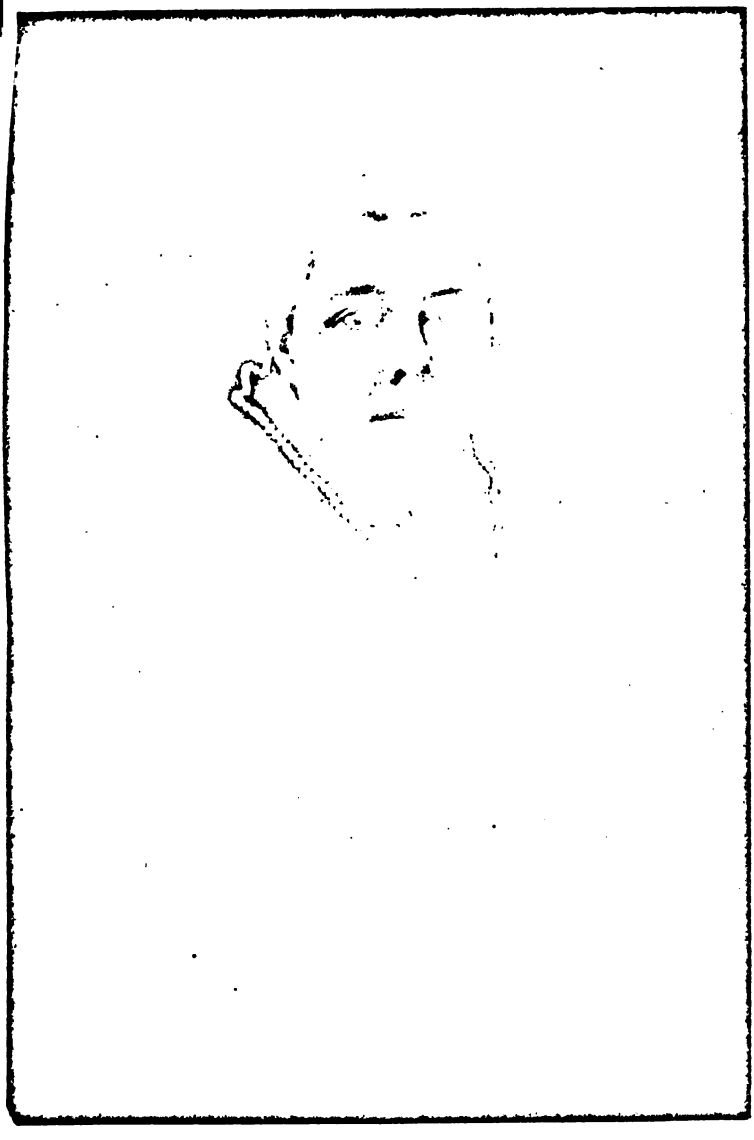

ANNIE BESANT.

Taken in 1885, by H. S. MENDELSSOHN, *27, Cathcart Road, South Kensington, London, S.W.*

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES.

BY

ANNIE BESANT

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AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES.

I AM so often asked for references to some pamphlet or journal in which may be found some outline of my life, and the enquiries are so often couched in terms of such real kindness, that I have resolved to pen a few brief autobiographical sketches, which may avail to satisfy friendly questioners, and to serve, in some measure, as defence against unfair attack.

I.

On October 1st, 1847, I made my appearance in this "vale of tears", "little Pheasantina", as I was irreverently called by a giddy aunt, a pet sister of my mother's. Just at that time my father and mother were staying within the boundaries of the City of London, so that I was born well "within the sound of Bow bells".

Though born in London, however, full three quarters of my blood are Irish. My dear mother was a Morris—the spelling of the name having been changed from Maurice some five generations back—and I have often heard her tell a quaint story, illustrative of that family pride which is so common a feature of a decayed Irish family. She was one of a large family, and her father and mother, gay, handsome, and extravagant, had wasted merrily what remained to them of patrimony. I can remember her father well, for I was fourteen years of age when he died. A bent old man, with hair like driven snow, splendidly handsome in his old age, hot-tempered to passion at the lightest provocation, loving and wrath in quick succession. As the

family grew larger and the means grew smaller, many a pinch came on the household, and the parents were glad to accept the offer of a relative to take charge of Emily, the second daughter. A very proud old lady was this maiden aunt, and over the mantel-piece of her drawing-room ever hung a great diagram, a family tree, which mightily impressed the warm imagination of the delicate child she had taken in charge. It was a lengthy and well-grown family tree, tracing back the Morris family to the days of Charlemagne, and branching out from a stock of "the seven kings of France". Was there ever yet a decayed Irish family that did not trace itself back to some "kings"? and these "Milesian kings"—who had been expelled from France, doubtless for good reasons, and who had sailed across the sea and landed in fair Erin, and there had settled and robbed and fought—did more good 800 years after their death than they did, I expect, during their ill-spent lives, if they proved a source of gentle harmless pride to the old maiden lady who admired their names over her mantel-piece in the earlier half of the present century. And, indeed, they acted as a kind of moral thermometer, in a fashion that would much have astonished their ill-doing and barbarous selves. For my mother has told me how when she would commit some piece of childish naughtiness, her aunt would say, looking gravely over her spectacles at the small culprit: "Emily, your conduct is unworthy of the descendant of the seven kings of France." And Emily, with her sweet grey Irish eyes, and her curling masses of raven-black hair, would cry in penitent shame over her unworthiness, with some vague idea that those royal, and to her very real ancestors, would despise her small sweet rosebud self, as wholly unworthy of their disreputable majesties. But that same maiden aunt trained the child right well, and I keep ever grateful memory of her, though I never knew her, for her share in forming the tenderest, sweetest, proudest, purest, noblest woman I have ever known. I have never met a woman more selflessly devoted to those she loved, more passionately contemptuous of all that was mean or base, more keenly sensitive on every question of honor, more iron in will, more sweet in tenderness, than the mother who made my girlhood sunny as dreamland, who guarded me until my marriage from every touch of pain that she could ward off, or

could bear for me, who suffered more in every trouble that touched me in later life than I did myself, and who died in the little house I had taken for our new home in Norwood, worn out ere old age touched her, by sorrow, poverty and pain, in May, 1874.

Of my father my memory is less vivid, for he died when I was but five years old. He was of mixed race, English on his father's side, Irish on his mother's, and was born in Galway, and educated in Ireland; he took his degree at Dublin University, and walked the hospitals as a medical student. But after he had qualified as a medical man a good appointment was offered him by a relative in the City of London, and he never practised regularly as a doctor.

In the City his prospects were naturally promising; the elder branch of the Wood family, to which he belonged, had for many generations been settled in Devonshire, farming their own land. When the eldest son William, my father, came of age, he joined with his father to cut off the entail, and the old acres were sold. Meanwhile members of other branches had entered commercial life, and had therein prospered exceedingly. One of them had become Lord Mayor of London, had vigorously supported the unhappy Queen Caroline, had paid the debts of the Duke of Kent, in order that that reputable individual might return to England with his Duchess, so that the future heir to the throne might be born on English soil; he had been rewarded with a baronetcy as a cheap method of paying his services. Another, my father's first cousin once removed, a young barrister, had successfully pleaded a suit in which was concerned the huge fortune of a miserly relative, and had thus laid the foundations of a great success; he won for himself a vice-chancellorship and a knighthood, and then the Lord Chancellorship of England, with the barony of Hatherley. A third, a brother of the last, Western Wood, was doing good service in the House of Commons. A fourth, a cousin of the last two, had thrown himself with such spirit and energy into mining work, that he had accumulated a fortune. In fact all the scattered branches had made their several ways in the world, save that elder one to which my father belonged. That had vegetated on down in the country, and had grown poorer while the others grew richer. My father's brothers

had somewhat of a fight for life. One has prospered and is comfortable and well-to-do. The other led for years a rough and wandering life, and "came to grief" generally. Some years ago I heard of him as a store-keeper in Portsmouth dock-yard, occasionally boasting in feeble fashion that his cousin was Lord Chancellor of England, and not many months since I heard from him in South Africa, where he has secured some appointment in the Commissariat Department, not, I fear, of a very lucrative character.

Let us come back to Pheasantina, who, I am told, was a delicate and somewhat fractious infant, giving to both father and mother considerable cause for anxiety. Her first attempts at rising in the world were attended with disaster, for as she was lying in a cradle, with carved iron canopy, and was for a moment left by her nurse in full faith that she could not rise from the recumbent position, Miss Pheasantina determined to show that she was capable of unexpected independence, and made a vigorous struggle to assume that upright position which is the proud prerogative of man. In another moment the recumbent position was re-assumed, and the nurse returning found the baby's face covered with blood, streaming from a severe wound on the forehead, the iron fretwork having proved harder than the baby's head. The scar remains down to the present time, and gives me the valuable peculiarity of only wrinkling up one side of my forehead when I raise my eyebrows, a feat that I defy any of my readers to emulate. The heavy cut has, I suppose, so injured the muscles in that spot that they have lost the normal power of contraction.

My earliest personal recollections are of a house and garden that we lived in when I was three and four years of age, situated in Grove Road, St. John's Wood. I can remember my mother hovering round the dinner-table to see that all was bright for the home-coming husband; my brother—two years older than myself—and I watching "for papa"; the loving welcome, the game of romps that always preceded the dinner of the elder folks. I can remember on the first of October, 1851, jumping up in my little cot, and shouting out triumphantly: "Papa! mamma! I am four years old!" and the grave demand of my brother, conscious of superior age, at dinner-time: "May not Annie have a knife to-day, as she is four years old?"

It was a sore grievance during that same year 1851, that I was not judged old enough to go to the Great Exhibition, and I have a faint memory of my brother consolingly bringing me home one of those folding pictured strips that are sold in the streets, on which were imaged glories that I longed only the more to see. Far-away, dusky, trivial memories, these. What a pity it is that a baby cannot notice, cannot observe, cannot remember, and so throw light on the fashion of the dawning of the external world on the human consciousness. If only we could remember how things looked when they were first imaged on the retinæ; what we felt when first we became conscious of the outer world; what the feeling was as faces of father and mother grew out of the surrounding chaos and became familiar things, greeted with a smile, lost with a cry; if only memory would not become a mist when in later years we strive to throw our glances backward into the darkness of our infancy, what lessons we might learn to help our stumbling psychology, how many questions might be solved whose answers we are groping for in vain.

II.

The next scene that stands out clearly against the background of the past is that of my father's death-bed. The events which led to his death I know from my dear mother. He had never lost his fondness for the profession for which he had been trained, and having many medical friends, he would now and then accompany them on their hospital rounds, or share with them the labors of the dissecting room. It chanced that during the dissection of the body of a person who had died of rapid consumption, my father cut his finger against the edge of the breast-bone. The cut did not heal easily, and the finger became swollen and inflamed. "I would have that finger off, Wood, if I were you," said one of the surgeons, a day or two afterwards, on seeing the state of the wound. But the others laughed at the suggestion, and my father, at first inclined to submit to the amputation, was persuaded to "leave Nature alone".

About the middle of August, 1852, he got wet through,

riding on the top of an omnibus, and the wetting resulted in a severe cold, which "settled on his chest". One of the most eminent doctors of the day, as able as he was rough in manner, was called to see him. He examined him carefully, sounded his lungs, and left the room followed by my mother. "Well?" she asked, scarcely anxious as to the answer, save as it might worry her husband to be kept idly at home. "You must keep up his spirits", was the thoughtless answer. "He is in a galloping consumption; you will not have him with you six weeks longer." The wife staggered back, and fell like a stone on the floor. But love triumphed over agony, and half an hour later she was again at her husband's side, never to leave it again for ten minutes at a time, night or day, till he was lying with closed eyes asleep in death.

I was lifted on to the bed to "say good-bye to dear Papa" on the day before his death, and I remember being frightened at his eyes which looked so large, and his voice which sounded so strange, as he made me promise always to be "a very good girl to darling Mamma, as Papa was going right away". I remember insisting that "Papa should kiss Cherry", a doll given me on my birthday, three days before, by his direction, and being removed, crying and struggling, from the room. He died on the following day, October 5th, and I do not think that my elder brother and I—who were staying at our maternal grandfather's—went to the house again until the day of the funeral. With the death, my mother broke down, and when all was over they carried her senseless from the room. I remember hearing afterwards how, when she recovered her senses, she passionately insisted on being left alone, and locked herself into her room for the night; and how on the following morning her mother, at last persuading her to open the door, started back at the face she saw with the cry: "Good God! Emily! your hair is white!" It was even so; her hair, black, glossy and abundant, which, contrasting with her large grey eyes, had made her face so strangely attractive, had turned grey in that night of agony, and to me my mother's face is ever framed in exquisite silver bands of hair as white as the driven unsullied snow.

I have heard that the love between my father and mother was a very beautiful thing, and it most certainly stamped her character for life. He was keenly intellectual and

splendidly educated; a mathematician and a good classical scholar, thoroughly master of French, German, Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese, with a smattering of Hebrew and Gaelic, the treasures of ancient and of modern literature were his daily household delight. Nothing pleased him so well as to sit with his wife, reading aloud to her while she worked; now translating from some foreign poet, now rolling forth melodiously the exquisite cadences of Queen Mab. Student of philosophy as he was, he was deeply and steadily sceptical; and a very religious relative has told me that he often drove her from the room by his light playful mockery of the tenets of the Christian faith. His mother and sister were strict Roman Catholics, and near the end forced a priest into his room, but the priest was promptly ejected by the wrath of the dying man, and by the almost fierce resolve of the wife that no messenger of the creed he detested should trouble her darling at the last.

This scepticism of his was not wholly shared by his wife, who held to the notion that women should be "religious," while men might philosophise as they would; but it so deeply influenced her own intellectual life that she utterly rejected the most irrational dogmas of Christianity, such as eternal punishment, the vicarious atonement of Christ, the doctrine that faith is necessary to salvation, the equality of Christ with God, the infallibility of the Bible; she made morality of life, not orthodoxy of belief, her measure of "religion"; she was "a Christian", in her own view of the matter, but it was a Christian of the school of Jowett, of Colenso, and of Stanley. The latter writer had for her, in after years, the very strongest fascination, and I am not sure that his "variegated use of words", so fiercely condemned by Dr. Pusey, did not exactly suit her own turn of mind, which shrank back intellectually from the crude dogmas of orthodox Christianity, but clung poetically to the artistic side of religion, to its art and to its music, to the grandeur of its glorious fanes, and the solemnity of its stately ritual. She detested the meretricious show, the tinsel gaudiness, the bowing and genuflecting, the candles and the draperies, of Romanism, and of its pinchbeck imitator Ritualism; but I doubt whether she knew any keener pleasure than to sit in one of the carved stalls of Westminster Abbey, listening to the polished sweetness of Dean

Stanley's exquisite eloquence; or to the thunder of the organ mingled with the voices of the white-robed choristers, as the music rose and fell, as it pealed up to the arched roof and lost itself in the carven fretwork, or died away softly among the echoes of the chapels in which kings and saints and sages lay sleeping, enshrining in themselves the glories and the sorrows of the past.

To return to October, 1852. On the day of the funeral my elder brother and I were taken back to the house where my father lay dead, and while my brother went as chief mourner, poor little boy swamped in crape and miserable exceedingly, I sat in an upstairs room with my mother and her sisters; and still comes back to me her figure, seated on a sofa, with fixed white face and dull vacant eyes, counting the minutes till the funeral procession would have reached Kensal Green, and then following in mechanical fashion, prayer-book in hand, the service, stage by stage, until to my unspeakable terror, with the words, dully spoken, "It is all over", she fell back fainting. And here comes a curious psychological problem which has often puzzled me. Some weeks later she resolved to go and see her husband's grave. A relative who had been present at the funeral volunteered to guide her to the spot, but lost his way in that wilderness of graves. Another of the small party went off to find one of the officials and to enquire, and my mother said: "If you will take me to the chapel where the first part of the service was read, I will find the grave". To humor her whim, he led her thither, and, looking round for a moment or two, she started from the chapel, followed the path along which the corpse had been borne, and was standing by the newly-made grave when the official arrived to point it out. Her own explanation was that she had seen all the service; what is certain is, that she had never been to Kensal Green before, and that she walked steadily to the grave from the chapel. Whether the spot had been carefully described to her, whether she had heard others talking of its position or not, we could never ascertain; she had no remembrance of any such description, and the matter always remained to us a problem. But after the lapse of years a hundred little things may have been forgotten which unconsciously served as guides at the time. She must have been, of course, at that time, in a state of abnormal nervous excitation, a state of which

another proof was shortly afterwards given. The youngest of our little family was a boy about three years younger than myself, a very beautiful child, blue-eyed and golden haired—I have still a lock of his hair, of exquisite pale golden hue—and the little lad was passionately devoted to his father. He was always a delicate boy, and had I suppose, therefore, been specially petted, and he fretted continually for "papa". It is probable that the consumptive taint had touched him, for he pined steadily away, with no marked disease, during the winter months. One morning my mother calmly stated: "Alf is going to die". It was in vain that it was urged on her that with the spring strength would return to the child. "No", she persisted. "He was lying asleep in my arms last night, and William came to me and said that he wanted Alf with him, but that I might keep the other two." She had in her a strong strain of Celtic superstition, and thoroughly believed that this "vision"—a most natural dream under the circumstances—was a direct "warning", and that her husband had come to her to tell her of her approaching loss. This belief was, in her eyes, thoroughly justified by the little fellow's death in the following March, calling to the end for "Papa! papa!" My brother and I were allowed to see him just before he was placed in his coffin; I can see him still, so white and beautiful, with a black spot in the middle of the fair waxen forehead, and I remember the deadly cold which startled me when I was told to kiss my little brother. It was the first time that I had touched Death. That black spot made a curious impression on me, and long afterwards, asking what had caused it, I was told that at the moment after his death my mother had passionately kissed the baby brow. Pathetic thought, that the mother's kiss of farewell should have been marked by the first sign of corruption on the child's face.

And now began my mother's time of struggle and of anxiety. Hitherto, since her marriage, she had known no money troubles, for her husband was earning a good income; he was apparently vigorous and well: no thought of anxiety clouded their future. When he died, he believed that he left his wife and children safe, at least, from pecuniary distress. It was not so. I know nothing of the details, but the outcome of all was that nothing was left for the widow and children, save a trifle of ready money. The resolve to

which my mother came was characteristic. Two of her husband's relatives, Western and Sir William Wood, offered to educate her son at a good city school, and to start him in commercial life, using their great city influence to push him forward. But the young lad's father and mother had talked of a different future for their eldest boy; he was to go to a public school, and then to the University, and was to enter one of the "learned professions"—to take orders, the mother wished; to go to the Bar, the father hoped. On his death-bed there was nothing more earnestly urged by my father than that Harry should receive the best possible education, and the widow was resolute to fulfil that last wish. In her eyes, a city school was not "the best possible education", and the Irish pride rebelled against the idea of her son not being "a University man". Many were the lectures poured out on the young widow's head about her "foolish pride", especially by the female members of the Wood family; and her persistence in her own way caused a considerable alienation between herself and them. But Western and William, though half-disapproving, remained her friends, and lent many a helping hand to her in her first difficult struggles. After much cogitation, she resolved that the boy should be educated at Harrow, where the fees are comparatively low to lads living in the town, and that he should go thence to Cambridge or to Oxford, as his tastes should direct. A bold scheme for a penniless widow, but carried out to the letter; for never dwelt in a delicate body a more resolute mind and will than that of my dear mother.

In a few months' time—during which we lived, poorly enough, in Richmond Terrace, Clapham, close to her father and mother—to Harrow, then, she betook herself, into lodgings over a grocer's shop, and set herself to look for a house. This grocer was a very pompous man, fond of long words, and patronised the young widow exceedingly, and one day my mother related with much amusement how he had told her that she was sure to get on if she worked hard. "Look at me!" he said swelling visibly with importance; "I was once a poor boy, without a penny of my own, and now I am a comfortable man, and have my submarine villa to go to every evening". That "submarine villa" was an object of amusement when we passed it in our walks for many a long day. "There is Mr. ——'s

submarine villa", some one would say, laughing: and I, too, used to laugh merrily, because my elders did, though my understanding of the difference between suburban and submarine was on a par with that of the honest grocer.

My mother had fortunately found a boy, whose parents were glad to place him in her charge, of about the age of her own son, to educate with him; and by this means she was able to pay for a tutor, to prepare the two boys for school. The tutor had a cork leg, which was a source of serious trouble to me, for it stuck out straight behind when we knelt down to family prayers—conduct which struck me as irreverent and unbecoming, but which I always felt a desire to imitate. After about a year, my mother found a house which she thought would suit her scheme, namely, to obtain permission from Dr. Vaughan, the then Head Master of Harrow, to take some boys into her house, and so gain means of education for her own son. Dr. Vaughan, who must have been won by the gentle, strong, little woman, from that time forth became her earnest friend and helper; and to the counsel and active assistance both of himself and of his wife, was due much of the success that crowned her toil. He made only one condition in granting the permission she asked, and that was, that she should also have in her house one of the masters of the school, so that the boys should not suffer from the want of a house-tutor. This condition, of course, she readily accepted, and the arrangement lasted for ten years, until after her son had left school for Cambridge.

The house she took is now, I am sorry to say, pulled down, and replaced by a hideous red-brick structure. It was very old and rambling, rose-covered in front, ivy-covered behind; it stood on the top of Harrow Hill, between the church and the school, and had once been the vicarage of the parish, but the vicar had left it because it was so far removed from the part of the village where all his work lay. The drawing-room opened by an old-fashioned half-window, half-door—which proved a constant source of grief to me, for whenever I had on a new frock I always tore it on the bolt as I flew through it—into a large garden which sloped down one side of the hill, and was filled with the most delightful old trees, fir and laurel, may, mulberry, hazel, apple, pear, and damson, not to mention currant and gooseberry bushes innumerable, and

large strawberry beds spreading down the sunny slopes. There was not a tree there that I did not climb, and one, a widespreading Portugal laurel, was my private country house. I had there my bedroom and my sitting-rooms, my study, and my larder. The larder was supplied by the fruit-trees, from which I was free to pick as I would, and in the study I would sit for hours with some favorite book —Milton's "Paradise Lost" the chief favorite of all. The birds must often have felt startled, when from the small swinging form perching on a branch, came out in childish tones the "Thrones, dominations, princedoms, virtues, powers", of Milton's stately and sonorous verse. I liked to personify Satan, and to declaim the grand speeches of the hero-rebel, and many a happy hour did I pass in Milton's heaven and hell, with for companions Satan and "the Son", Gabriel and Abdiel. Then there was a terrace running by the side of the churchyard, always dry in the wettest weather, and bordered by an old wooden fence, over which clambered roses of every shade; never was such a garden for roses as that of the Old Vicarage. At the end of the terrace was a little summer-house, and in this a trap-door in the fence, which swung open and displayed one of the fairest views in England. Sheer from your feet downwards went the hill, and then far below stretched the wooded country till your eye reached the towers of Windsor Castle, far away on the horizon. It was the view at which Byron was never tired of gazing, as he lay on the flat tombstone close by—Byron's tomb, as it is still called—of which he wrote:

"Again I behold where for hours I have pondered,
As reclining, at eve, on yon tombstone I lay,
Or round the steep brow of the churchyard I wandered,
To catch the last gleam of the sun's setting ray."

Reader mine, if ever you go to Harrow, ask permission to enter the old garden, and try the effect of that sudden burst of beauty, as you swing back the small trap-door at the terrace end.

Into this house we moved on my eighth birthday, and for eleven years it was "home" to me, left always with regret, returned to always with joy.

Almost immediately afterwards I left my mother for the first time; for one day, visiting a family who lived close

by, I found a stranger sitting in the drawing-room, a lame lady with a strong face, which softened marvellously as she smiled at the child who came dancing in; she called me to her presently, and took me on her lap and talked to me, and on the following day our friend came to see my mother, to ask if she would let me go away and be educated with this lady's niece, coming home for the holidays regularly, but leaving my education in her hands. At first my mother would not hear of it, for she and I scarcely ever left each other; my love for her was an idolatry, hers for me a devotion. [A foolish little story, about which I was unmercifully teased for years, marked that absolute idolatry of her, which has not yet faded from my heart. In tenderest rallying one day of the child who trotted after her everywhere, content to sit, or stand, or wait, if only she might touch hand or dress of "mamma," she said: "Little one (the name by which she always called me), if you cling to mamma in this way, I must really get a string and tie you to my apron, and how will you like that?" "O mamma darling," came the fervent answer, "do let it be in a knot." And, indeed, the tie of love between us was so tightly knotted that nothing ever loosened it till the sword of Death cut that which pain and trouble never availed to slacken in the slightest degree.] But it was urged upon her that the advantages of education offered were such as no money could purchase for me; that it would be a disadvantage for me to grow up in a houseful of boys—and, in truth, I was as good a cricketer and climber as the best of them—that my mother would soon be obliged to send me to school, unless she accepted an offer which gave me every advantage of school without its disadvantages. At last she yielded, and it was decided that Miss Marryat, on returning home, should take me with her.

Miss Marryat—the favorite sister of Captain Marryat, the famous novelist—was a maiden lady of large means. She had nursed her brother through the illness that ended in his death, and had been living with her mother at Wimbledon Park. On her mother's death she looked round for work which would make her useful in the world, and finding that one of her brothers had a large family of girls, she offered to take charge of one of them, and to educate her thoroughly. Chancing to come to Harrow,

my good fortune threw me in her way, and she took a fancy to me and thought she would like to teach two little girls rather than one. Hence her offer to my mother.

Miss Marryat had a perfect genius for teaching, and took in it the greatest delight. From time to time she added another child to our party, sometimes a boy, sometimes a girl. At first, with Amy Marryat and myself, there was a little boy, Walter Powys, son of a clergyman with a large family, and him she trained for some years, and then sent him on to school admirably prepared. She chose "her children"—as she loved to call us—in very definite fashion. Each must be gently born and gently trained, but in such position that the education freely given should be a relief and aid to a slender parental purse. It was her delight to seek out and aid those on whom poverty presses most heavily, when the need for education for the children weighs on the proud and the poor. "Auntie" we all called her, for she thought "Miss Marryat" seemed too cold and stiff. She taught us everything herself except music, and for this she had a master, practising us in composition, in recitation, in reading aloud English and French, and later, German, devoting herself to training us in the soundest, most thorough fashion. No words of mine can tell how much I owe her, not only of knowledge, but of that love of knowledge which has remained with me ever since as a constant spur to study.

Her method of teaching may be of interest to some, who desire to train children with the least pain, and the most enjoyment to the little ones themselves. First, we never used a spelling-book—that torment of the small child—nor an English grammar. But we wrote letters, telling of the things we had seen in our walks, or told again some story we had read; these childish compositions she would read over with us, correcting all faults of spelling, of grammar, of style, of cadence; a clumsy sentence would be read aloud, that we might hear how unmusical it sounded; an error in observation or expression pointed out. Then, as the letters recorded what we had seen the day before, the faculty of observation was drawn out and trained. "Oh, dear! I have nothing to say!" would come from a small child, hanging over a slate. "Did you not go out for a walk yesterday?" Auntie would question. "Yes", would

be sighed out; "but there's nothing to say about it". "Nothing to say! And you walked in the lanes for an hour and saw nothing, little No-eyes? You must use your eyes better to-day." Then there was a very favorite "lesson", which proved an excellent way of teaching spelling. We used to write out lists of all the words we could think of, which sounded the same but were differently spelt. Thus: "key, quay," "knight, night," and so on; and great was the glory of the child who found the largest number. Our French lessons—as the German later—included reading from the very first. On the day on which we began German we began reading Schiller's "Wilhelm Tell," and the verbs given to us to copy out were those that had occurred in the reading. We learned much by heart, but always things that in themselves were worthy to be learned. We were never given the dry questions and answers which lazy teachers so much affect. We were taught history by one reading aloud while the others worked—the boys as well as the girls learning the use of the needle. "It's like a girl to sew," said a little fellow, indignantly, one day. "It is like a baby to have to run after a girl if you want a button sewn on," quoth Auntie. Geography was learned by painting skeleton maps—an exercise much delighted in by small fingers—and by putting together puzzle maps, in which countries in the map of a continent, or counties in the map of a country, were always cut out in their proper shapes. I liked big empires in those days; there was a solid satisfaction in putting down Russia, and seeing what a large part of the map was filled up thereby.

The only grammar that we ever learned as grammar was the Latin, and that not until composition had made us familiar with the use of the rules therein given. Auntie had a great horror of children learning by rote things they did not understand, and then fancying they knew them. "What do you mean by that expression, Annie?" she would ask me. After feeble attempts to explain, I would answer: "Indeed, Auntie, I know in my own head, but I can't explain". "Then, indeed, Annie, you do not know in your own head, or you could explain, so that I might know in my own head." And so a healthy habit was fostered of clearness of thought and of expression. The Latin grammar was used because it was more perfect than the

modern grammars, and served as a solid foundation for modern languages.

Miss Marryat took a beautiful place, Fern Hill, near Charmouth, in Dorsetshire, on the borders of Devon, and there she lived for some five years, a centre of beneficence in the district. She started a Sunday-school, and a Bible-class after a while for the lads too old for the school, who clamored for admission to her class in it. She visited the poor, taking help wherever she went, and sending food from her own table to the sick. It was characteristic of her that she would never give "scraps" to the poor, but would have a basin brought in at dinner, and would cut the best slice to tempt the invalid appetite. Money she rarely, if ever, gave, but she would find a day's work, or busy herself to seek permanent employment for anyone asking aid. Stern in rectitude herself, and iron to the fawning or the dishonest, her influence, whether she was feared or loved, was always for good. Of the strictest sect of the Evangelicals, she was an Evangelical. On the Sunday no books were allowed save the Bible or the "Sunday at Home"; but she would try to make the day bright by various little devices; by a walk with her in the garden; by the singing of hymns, always attractive to children; by telling us wonderful missionary stories of Moffat and Livingstone, whose adventures with savages and wild beasts were as exciting as any tale of Mayne Reid's. We used to learn passages from the Bible and hymns for repetition; a favorite amusement was a "Bible puzzle", such as a description of some Bible scene, which was to be recognised by the description. Then we taught in the Sunday-school, for Auntie would tell us that it was useless for us to learn if we did not try to help those who had no one to teach them. The Sunday-school lessons had to be carefully prepared on the Saturday, for we were always taught that work given to the poor should be work that cost something to the giver. This principle, regarded by her as an illustration of the text, "Shall I give unto the Lord my God that which has cost me nothing?" ran through all her precept and her practice. When in some public distress we children went to her crying, and asking whether we could not help the little children who were starving, her prompt reply was: "What will you give up for them?". And then she said that if we liked to give up the use of

sugar, we might thus each save 6d. a week to give away. I doubt if a healthier lesson can be given to children than that of personal self-denial for the good of others.

Daily, when our lessons were over, we had plenty of fun; long walks and rides, rides on a lively pony, who found small children most amusing, and on which the coachman taught us to stick firmly, whatever his eccentricities of the moment; delightful all-day picnics in the lovely country round Charmouth, Auntie our merriest playfellow. Never was a healthier home, physically and mentally, made for young things than in that quiet village. And then the delight of the holidays! The pride of my mother at the good report of her darling's progress, and the renewal of acquaintance with every nook and corner in the dear old house and garden.

III.

The strong and intense Evangelicalism of Miss Marryat colored the whole of my early religious thought. I was naturally enthusiastic and fanciful, and was apt to throw myself strongly into the current of the emotional life around me, and hence I easily reflected the stern and narrow creed which ruled over my daily life. It was to me a matter of the most intense regret that Christians did not go about as in the "Pilgrim's Progress", armed to do battle with Apollyon and Giant Despair, or fight through a whole long day against thronging foes, until night brought victory and release. It would have been so easy, I used to think, to do tangible battle of that sort, so much easier than to learn lessons, and keep one's temper, and mend one's stockings. Quick to learn, my lessons of Bible and Prayer Book gave me no trouble, and I repeated page after page with little labor and much credit. I remember being praised for my love of the Bible, because I had learned by heart all the epistle of St. James's, while, as a matter of fact, the desire to distinguish myself was a far more impelling motive than any love of "the holy book;" the dignified cadences pleased my ear, and were swiftly caught and reproduced, and I was proud of the easy fashion in

which I mastered and recited page after page. Another source of "carnal pride"—little suspected, I fear, by my dear instructress—was found in the often-recurring prayer meetings. In these the children were called on to take a part, and we were bidden pray aloud; this proceeding was naturally a sore trial, and being endued with an inordinate amount of "false pride"—the fear of appearing ridiculous, *i.e.*, with self conceit—it was a great trouble when the summons came: "Annie dear, will you speak to our Lord". But the plunge once made, and the trembling voice steadied, enthusiasm and facility for cadenced speech always swallowed up the nervous "fear of breaking down", and I fear me that the prevailing thought was more often that God must think I prayed very nicely, than that I was a "miserable sinner", asking "pardon for the sake of Jesus Christ". The sense of sin, the contrition for man's fallen state, which are required by Evangelicalism, can never be truly felt by any child; but whenever a sensitive, dreamy, and enthusiastic child comes under strong Evangelistic influence, it is sure to manifest "signs of saving grace". As far as I can judge now, the total effect of the Calvinistic training was to make me somewhat morbid, but this tendency was counteracted by the healthier tone of my mother's thought, and the natural gay buoyancy of my nature rose swiftly whenever the pressure of the teaching that I was "a child of sin", and could "not naturally please God", was removed.

In the spring of 1861, Miss Marryat announced her intention of going abroad, and asked my dear mother to let me accompany her. A little nephew whom she had adopted was suffering from cataract, and she desired to place him under the care of the famous Düsseldorf oculist. Amy Marryat had been recalled home soon after the death of her mother, who had died in giving birth to the child adopted by Miss Marryat, and named at her desire after her favorite brother Frederick (Captain Marryat). Her place had been taken by a girl a few months older than myself, Emma Mann, one of the daughters of a clergyman who had married a Miss Stanley, closely related, indeed if I remember rightly, a sister of the Miss Mary Stanley who did such noble work in nursing in the Crimea.

For some months we had been diligently studying German, for Miss Marryat thought it wise that we should

know a language fairly well before we visited the country of which it was the native tongue. We had been trained also to talk French daily during dinner, so we were not quite "helpless foreigners" when we steamed away from St. Catherine's Docks, and found ourselves on the following day in Antwerp, amid what seemed to us a very Babel of conflicting tongues. Alas for our carefully spoken French, articulated laboriously. We were lost in that swirl of disputing luggage-porters, and could not understand a word! But Miss Marryat was quite equal to the occasion, being by no means new to travelling, and her French stood the test triumphantly, and steered us safely to a hotel. On the morrow we started again through Aix-la-Chapelle to Bonn, the town which lies on the borders of the exquisite scenery of which the Siebengebirge and Rolandseck serve as the magic portal. Our experiences in Bonn were not wholly satisfactory. Dear Auntie was a maiden lady, looking on all young men as wolves to be kept far from her growing lambs. Bonn was a university town, and there was a mania just then prevailing there for all things English. Emma was a plump, rosy, fair-haired typical English maiden, full of frolic and harmless fun; I a very slight, pale, black-haired girl, alternating between wild fun and extreme pensiveness. In the boarding-house to which we went at first—the "Château du Rhin", a beautiful place overhanging the broad blue Rhine—there chanced to be staying the two sons of the late Duke of Hamilton, the Marquis of Douglas and Lord Charles, with their tutor. They had the whole drawing-room floor: we a sitting-room on the ground floor and bedrooms above. The lads discovered that Miss Marryat did not like her "children" to be on speaking terms with any of the "male sect". Here was a fine source of amusement. They would make their horses caracole on the gravel in front of our window; they would be just starting for their ride as we went for walk or drive, and would salute us with doffed hat and low bow; they would waylay us on our way downstairs with demure "Good morning"; they would go to church and post themselves so that they could survey our pew, and Lord Charles—who possessed the power of moving at will the whole skin of the scalp—would wriggle his hair up and down till we were choking with laughter, to our own imminent risk.

After a month of this, Auntie was literally driven out of the pretty *Château*, and took refuge in a girls' school, much to our disgust, but still she was not allowed to be at rest. Mischievous students would pursue us wherever we went; sentimental Germans, with gashed cheeks, would whisper complimentary phrases as we passed; mere boyish nonsense of most harmless kind, but the rather stern English lady thought it "not proper", and after three months of Bonn we were sent home for the holidays, somewhat in disgrace. But we had some lovely excursions during those months; such clambering up mountains, such rows on the swift-flowing Rhine, such wanderings in exquisite valleys. I have a long picture-gallery to retire into when I want to think of something fair, in recalling the moon as it silvered the Rhine at the foot of Drachenfels, or the soft mist-veiled island where dwelt the lady who is consecrated for ever by Roland's love.

A couple of months later we rejoined Miss Marryat in Paris, where we spent seven happy workful months. On Wednesdays and Saturdays we were free from lessons, and many a long afternoon was passed in the galleries of the Louvre, till we became familiar with the masterpieces of art gathered there from all lands. I doubt if there was a beautiful church in Paris that we did not visit during those weekly wanderings; that of St. Germain de l'Auxerrois was my favorite—the church whose bell gave the signal for the massacre of St. Bartholomew—for it contained such marvellous stained glass, deepest purest glory of color that I had ever seen. The solemn beauty of Notre Dame, the somewhat gaudy magnificence of La Sainte Chapelle, the stateliness of La Madeleine, the impressive gloom of St. Roch, were all familiar to us. Other delights were found in mingling with the bright crowds which passed along the Champs Elysées and sauntered in the Bois de Boulogne, in strolling in the garden of the Tuileries, in climbing to the top of every monument whence view of Paris could be gained. The Empire was then in its heyday of glitter, and we much enjoyed seeing the brilliant escort of the imperial carriage, with plumes and gold and silver dancing and glistening in the sunlight, while in the carriage sat the exquisitely lovely empress, with the little boy beside her, touching his cap shyly, but with something of her own grace, in answer to a greeting—the boy who was

thought to be born to an imperial crown, but whose brief career was to find an ending from the spears of savages in a quarrel in which he had no concern.

In the spring of 1862 it chanced that the Bishop of Ohio visited Paris, and Mr. Forbes, then English chaplain at the Church of the Rue d'Aguesseau, arranged to have a confirmation. As said above, I was under deep "religious impressions", and, in fact, with the exception of that little aberration in Germany, I was decidedly a pious girl. I looked on theatres (never having been to one) as traps set by Satan for the destruction of foolish souls; I was quite determined never to go to a ball, and was prepared to "suffer for conscience sake"—little prig that I was—if I was desired to go to one. I was consequently quite prepared to take upon myself the vows made in my name at my baptism, and to renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil, with a heartiness and sincerity only equalled by my profound ignorance of the things I so readily resigned. That confirmation was to me a very solemn matter; the careful preparation, the prolonged prayers, the wondering awe as to the "sevenfold gifts of the Spirit", which were to be given by "the laying on of hands", all tended to excitement. I could scarcely control myself as I knelt at the altar rails, and felt as though the gentle touch of the aged Bishop, which fluttered for an instant on my bowed head, were the very touch of the wing of that "Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove", whose presence had been so earnestly invoked. Is there anything easier, I wonder, than to make a young and sensitive girl "intensely religious".

My mother came over for the confirmation and for the "first communion" on Easter Sunday, and we had a delightful fortnight together, returning home after we had wandered hand-in-hand over all my favorite haunts. The summer of 1862 was spent with Miss Marryat at Sidmouth, and, wise woman that she was, she now carefully directed our studies with a view to our coming enfranchisement from the "school-room". More and more were we trained to work alone; our leading-strings were slackened, so that we never felt them save when we blundered; and I remember that when I once complained, in loving fashion, that she was "teaching me so little", she told me that I was getting old enough to be trusted to work by myself, and

that I must not expect to "have Auntie for a crutch all through life". And I venture to say that this gentle withdrawal of constant supervision and teaching was one of the wisest and kindest things that this noble-hearted woman ever did for us. It is the usual custom to keep girls in the school-room until they "come out"; then, suddenly, they are left to their own devices, and, bewildered by their unaccustomed freedom, they waste time that might be priceless for their intellectual growth. Lately, the opening of universities to women has removed this danger for the more ambitious; but at the time of which I am writing no one dreamed of the changes soon to be made in the direction of the "higher education of women".

During the winter of 1862–1863 Miss Marryat was in London, and for a few months I remained there with her, attending the admirable French classes of M. Roche. In the spring I returned home to Harrow, going up each week to the classes; and when these were over, Auntie told me that she thought all she could usefully do was done, and that it was time that I should try my wings alone. So well, however, had she succeeded in her aims, that my emancipation from the school-room was but the starting-point of more eager study, though now the study turned into the lines of thought towards which my personal tendencies most attracted me. German I continued to read with a master, and music, under the marvellously able teaching of Mr. John Farmer, musical director of Harrow School, took up much of my time. My dear mother had a passion for music, and Beethoven and Bach were her favorite composers. There was scarcely a sonata of Beethoven's that I did not learn, scarcely a fugue of Bach's that I did not master. Mendelssohn's "Lieder" gave a lighter recreation, and many a happy evening did we spend, my mother and I, over the stately strains of the blind Titan, and the sweet melodies of the German wordless orator. Musical "At Homes", too, were favorite amusements at Harrow, and at these my facile fingers made me a welcome guest.

A very pleasant place was Harrow to a light-hearted serious-brained girl. The picked men of the Schools of Oxford and Cambridge came there as junior masters, so that one's partners at ball and croquet and archery could

talk as well as flirt. Never girl had, I venture to say, a brighter girlhood than mine. Every morning and much of the afternoon spent in eager earnest study: evenings in merry party or quiet home-life, one as delightful as the other. Archery and croquet had in me a most devoted disciple, and the "pomps and vanities" of the ballroom found the happiest of votaries. My darling mother certainly "spoiled" me, so far as were concerned all the small roughnesses of life. She never allowed a trouble of any kind to touch me, and cared only that all worries should fall on her, all joys on me. I know now what I never dreamed then, that her life was one of serious anxiety. The heavy burden of my brother's school and college-life pressed on her constantly, and her need of money was often serious. A lawyer whom she trusted absolutely cheated her systematically, using for his own purposes the remittances she made for payment of liabilities, thus keeping upon her a constant drain. Yet for me all that was wanted was ever there. Was it a ball to which we were going? I need never think of what I would wear till the time for dressing arrived, and there laid out ready for me was all I wanted, every detail complete from top to toe. No hand but hers must dress my hair, which, loosed, fell in dense curly masses nearly to my knees; no hand but hers must fasten dress and deck with flowers, and if I sometimes would coaxingly ask if I might not help by sewing in laces, or by doing some trifle in aid, she would kiss me and bid me run to my books or my play, telling me that her only pleasure in life was caring for her "treasure". Alas! how lightly we take the self-denying labor that makes life so easy, ere yet we have known what life means when the protecting mother-wing is withdrawn. So guarded and shielded had been my childhood and youth from every touch of pain and anxiety that love could bear for me, that I never dreamed that life might be a heavy burden, save as I saw it in the poor I was sent to help; all the joy of those happy years I took, not ungratefully I hope, but certainly with as glad unconsciousness of anything rare in it as I took the sunlight. Passionate love, indeed, I gave to my darling, but I never knew all I owed her till I passed out of her tender guardianship, till I left my mother's home. Is such training wise? I am not sure. It makes the ordinary roughnesses of life come with so stunning a

shock, when one goes out into the world, that one is apt to question whether some earlier initiation into life's sterner mysteries would not be wiser for the young. Yet it is a fair thing to have that joyous youth to look back upon, and at least it is a treasury of memory that no thief can steal in the struggles of later life.

During those happy years my brain was given plenty of exercise. I used to keep a list of the books I read, so that I might not neglect my work; and finding a "Library of the Fathers" on the shelves, I selected that for one *pièce de résistance*. Soon those strange mystic writers won over me a great fascination, and I threw myself ardently into a study of the question: "Where is now the Catholic Church?". I read Pusey, and Liddon, and Keble, with many another of that school, and many of the seventeenth century English divines. I began to fast—to the intense disapproval of my mother, who cared for my health far more than for all the Fathers the Church could boast of—to use the sign of the cross, to go to weekly communion. Indeed, the contrast I found between my early Evangelical training and the doctrines of the Primitive Christian Church would have driven me over to Rome, had it not been for the proofs afforded by Pusey and his co-workers, that the English Church might be Catholic although non-Roman. But for them I should most certainly have joined the Papal Communion; for if the Church of the early centuries be compared with Rome and with Geneva, there is no doubt that Rome shows marks of primitive Christianity of which Geneva is entirely devoid. I became content when I found that the practices and doctrines of the Anglican Church could be knitted on to those of the martyrs and confessors of the early Church, for it had not yet struck me that the early Church might itself be challenged. To me, at that time, the authority of Jesus was supreme and unassailable; his apostles were his infallible messengers; Clement of Rome, Polycarp, and Barnabas, these were the very pupils of the apostles themselves. I never dreamed of forgeries, of pious frauds, of writings falsely ascribed to venerated names. Nor do I now regret that so it was; for, without belief, the study of the early Fathers would be an intolerable weariness; and that old reading of mine has served me well in many of my later controversies with Christians, who knew the literature of their Church less well than I.

To this ecclesiastical reading was added some study of stray scientific works, but the number of these that came in my way was very limited. The atmosphere surrounding me was literary rather than scientific. I remember reading a translation of Plato that gave me great delight, and being rather annoyed by the insatiable questionings of Socrates. Lord Derby's translation of the Iliad also charmed me with its stateliness and melody, and Dante was another favorite study. Wordsworth and Cowper I much disliked, and into the same category went all the 17th and 18th century "poets," though I read them conscientiously through. Southey fascinated me with his wealth of Oriental fancies, while Spencer was a favorite book, put beside Milton and Dante. My novel reading was extremely limited; indeed the "three volume novel" was a forbidden fruit. My mother regarded these ordinary love-stories as unhealthy reading for a young girl, and gave me Scott and Kingsley, but not Miss Braddon or Mrs. Henry Wood. Nor would she take me to the theatre, though we went to really good concerts. She had a horror of sentimentality in girls, and loved to see them bright and gay, and above all things absolutely ignorant of all evil things and of premature love-dreams. Happy, healthy and workful were those too brief years.

IV.

My grandfather's house, No. 8, Albert Square, Clapham Road, was a second home from my earliest childhood.

That house, with its little strip of garden at the back, will always remain dear and sacred to me. I can see now the two almond trees, so rich in blossom every spring, so barren in fruit every autumn; the large spreading tufts of true Irish shamrock, brought from Ireland, and lovingly planted in the new grey London house, amid the smoke; the little nooks at the far end, wherein I would sit cosily out of sight reading a favorite book. Inside it was but a commonplace London house, only one room, perhaps, differing from any one that might have been found in any other house in the square. That was my grandfather's "work-

room", where he had a lathe fitted up, for he had a passion and a genius for inventive work in machinery. He took out patents for all sorts of ingenious contrivances, but always lost money. His favorite invention was of a "railway chair", for joining the ends of rails together, and in the ultimate success of this he believed to his death. It was (and is) used on several lines, and was found to answer splendidly, but the old man never derived any profit from his invention. The fact was he had no money, and those who had took it up and utilised it, and kept all the profit for themselves. There were several cases in which his patents dropped, and then others took up his inventions, and made a commercial success thereof.

A strange man altogether was that grandfather of mine, whom I can only remember as a grand-looking old man, with snow-white hair and piercing hawk's eyes. The merriest of wild Irishmen was he in his youth, and I have often wished that his biography had been written, if only as a picture of Dublin society at the time. He had an exquisite voice, and one night he and some of his wild comrades went out singing through the streets as beggars. Pennies, sixpences, shillings, and even half-crowns came showering down in recompense of street music of such unusual excellence; then the young scamps, ashamed of their gains, poured them all into the hat of a cripple they met, who must have thought that all the blessed saints were out that night in the Irish capital. On another occasion he went to the wake of an old woman who had been bent nearly double by rheumatism, and had been duly "laid out", and tied down firmly, so as to keep the body straight in the recumbent position. He hid under the bed, and when the whisky was flowing freely, and the orgie was at its height, he cut the ropes with a sharp knife, and the old woman suddenly sat up in bed, frightening the revellers out of their wits, and, luckily for my grandfather, out of the room. Many such tales would he tell, with quaint Irish humor, in his later days. He died, from a third stroke of paralysis, in 1862.

The Morrises were a very "clannish" family, and my grandfather's house was the London centre. All the family gathered there on each Christmastide, and on Christmas day was always held high festival. For long my brother and I were the only grandchildren within reach, and were

naturally made much of. The two sons were out in India, married, with young families. The youngest daughter was much away from home, and a second was living in Constantinople, but three others lived with their father and mother. Bessie, the eldest of the whole family, was a woman of rigid honor and conscientiousness, but poverty and the struggle to keep out of debt had soured her, and "Aunt Bessie" was an object of dread, not of love. One story of her early life will best tell her character. She was engaged to a young clergyman, and one day when Bessie was at church he preached a sermon taken without acknowledgment from some old divine. The girl's keen sense of honor was shocked at the deception, and she broke off her engagement, but remained unmarried for the rest of her life. "Careful and troubled about many things" was poor Aunt Bessie, and I remember being rather shocked one day at hearing her express her sympathy with Martha, when her sister left her to serve alone, and at her saying: "I doubt very much whether Jesus would have liked it if Martha had been lying about on the floor as well as Mary, and there had been no supper. But there! it's always those who do the work who are scolded, because they have not time to be as sweet and nice as those who do nothing." Nor could she ever approve of the treatment of the laborers in the parable, when those who "had borne the burden and heat of the day" received but the same wage as those that had worked but one hour. "It was not just", she would say doggedly. A sad life was hers, for she repelled all sympathy, and yet later I had reason to believe that she half broke her heart because none loved her well. She was ever gloomy, unsympathising, carping, but she worked herself to death for those whose love she chillily repulsed. She worked till, denying herself every comfort, she literally dropped. One morning, when she got out of bed, she fell, and crawling into bed again, quietly said she could do no more; lay there for some months, suffering horribly with unvarying patience; and died, rejoicing that at last she would have "rest".

Two other "Aunties" were my playfellows, and I their pet. Minnie, a brilliant pianiste, earned a precarious livelihood by teaching music. The long fasts, the facing of all weathers, the weary rides in omnibuses with soaked feet, broke down at last a splendid constitution, and after

some three years of torture, commencing with a sharp attack of English cholera, she died the year before my marriage. But during my girlhood she was the gayest and merriest of my friends, her natural buoyancy re-asserting itself whenever she could escape from her musical tread-mill. Great was my delight when she joined my mother and myself for our spring or summer trips, and when at my favorite St. Leonards—at the far unfashionable end, right away from the gay watering-place folk—we settled down for four or five happy weeks of sea and country, and when Minnie and I scampered over the country on horse-back, merry as children set free from school. My other favorite auntie was of a quieter type, a soft pretty loving little woman. "Co" we called her, for she was "such a cosy little thing", her father used to say. She was my mother's favorite sister, her "child", she would name her, because "Co" was so much her junior, and when she was a young girl the little child had been her charge. "Always take care of little Co", was one of my mother's dying charges to me, and fortunately "little Co" has—though the only one of my relatives who has done so—clung to me through change of faith, and through social ostracism. Her love for me, and her full belief that, however she differed from me, I meant right, have never varied, have never been shaken. She is intensely religious—as will be seen in the later story, wherein her life was much woven with mine—but however much "darling Annie's" views or actions might shock her, it is "darling Annie" through it all; "You are so good" she said to me the last time I saw her, looking up at me with all her heart in her eyes; "anyone so good as you must come to our dear Lord at last!" As though any, save a brute, could be aught but good to "little Co".

On the Christmas following my eighteenth birthday, a little Mission Church in which Minnie was much interested, was opened near Albert Square. My High Church enthusiasm was in full bloom, and the services in this little Mission Church were "high", whereas those in all the neighboring churches were "low". A Mr. Hoare, an intensely earnest man, was working there in most devoted fashion, and was glad to welcome any aid; we decorated his church, worked ornaments for it, and thought we were serving God when we were really amusing ourselves in a

small place where our help was over-estimated, and where the clergy, very likely unconsciously, flattered us for our devotion. Among those who helped to carry on the services there, was a young undermaster of Stockwell Grammar School, the Rev. Frank Besant, a Cambridge man, who had passed as 28th wrangler in his year, and who had just taken orders. At Easter we were again at Albert Square, and devoted much time to the little church, decking it on Easter Eve with soft yellow tufts of primrose blossom, and taking much delight in the unbounded admiration bestowed on the dainty spring blossoms by the poor who crowded in. I made a lovely white cross for the super-altar with camelias and azaleas and white geraniums, but after all it was not really as spring-like, as suitable for a "Resurrection", as the simple sweet wild flowers, still dewy from their nests in field and glade and lane.

That Easter was memorable to me for another cause. It saw waked and smothered my first doubt. That some people did doubt the historical accuracy of the Bible I knew, for one or two of the Harrow masters were friends of Colenso, the heretic Bishop of Natal, but fresh from my Patristic studies, I looked on heretics with blind horror, possibly the stronger from its very vagueness, and its ignorance of what it feared. My mother objected to my reading controversial books which dealt with the points at issue between Christianity and Freethought, and I did not care for her favorite Stanley, who might have widened my views, regarding him (on the word of Pusey) as "unsound in the faith once delivered to the saints". I had read Pusey's book on "Daniel the prophet", and, knowing nothing of the criticisms he attacked, I felt triumphant at his convincing demonstrations of their error, and felt sure that none but the wilfully blind could fail to see how weak were the arguments of the heretic writers. That stately preface of his was one of my favorite pieces of reading, and his dignified defence against all novelties of "that which must be old because it is eternal, and must be unchangeable because it is true", at once charmed and satisfied me. The delightful vagueness of Stanley, which just suited my mother's broad views, because it *was* vague and beautiful, was denounced by Pusey—not unwarrantably—as that "variegated use of words which destroys all definiteness of meaning". When she would bid me not be

uncharitable to those with whom I differed in matters of religion, I would answer in his words, that "charity to error is treason to truth", and that to speak out the truth unwaveringly as it was revealed, was alone "loyalty to God and charity to the souls of men".

Judge, then, of my terror at my own results when I found myself betrayed into writing down some contradictions from the Bible. With that poetic dreaming which is one of the charms of Catholicism, whether English or Roman, I threw myself back into the time of the first century as the "Holy Week" of 1866 approached. In order to facilitate the realisation of those last sacred days of God incarnate on earth, working out man's salvation, I resolved to write a brief history of that week, compiled from the four gospels, meaning then to try and realise each day the occurrences that had happened on the corresponding date in A.D. 33, and so to follow those "blessed feet" step by step, till they were

"... nailed for our advantage to the bitter cross."

With the fearlessness which springs from ignorance I sat down to my task. My method was as follows:

MATTHEW.	MARK.	LUKE.	JOHN.
PALM SUNDAY.	PALM SUNDAY.	PALM SUNDAY.	PALM SUNDAY.
Rode into Jerusalem. Purified the Temple. Returned to Bethany.	Rode into Jerusalem. Returned to Bethany.	Rode into Jerusalem. Purified the Temple. Note: "Taught daily in the Temple".	Rode into Jerusalem. Spoke in the Temple.
MONDAY.	MONDAY.	MONDAY.	MONDAY.
Cursed the fig tree. Taught in the Temple, and spake many parables. No breaks shown, but the fig tree (xxi., 19) did not wither till Tuesday (see Mark).	Cursed the fig-tree. Purified the Temple. Went out of city.	Like Matthew.	——

MATTHEW.	MARK.	LUKE.	JOHN.
TUESDAY.	TUESDAY.	TUESDAY.	TUESDAY.
All chaps. xxi., 20, xxii.-xxv., spoken on Tuesday, for xxvi., 2 gives Passover as "after two days".	Saw fig tree withered up. Then discourses.	Discourses. No date shown.	——
WEDNESDAY.	WEDNESDAY.	WEDNESDAY.	WEDNESDAY.
Blank. (Possibly remained in Bethany;		the alabaster box	of ointment.)
THURSDAY.	THURSDAY.	THURSDAY.	THURSDAY.
Preparation of Passover. Eating of Passover, and institution of the Holy Eucharist. Gethsemane. Betrayal by Judas. Led captive to Caiaphas. Denied by St. Peter.	Same as Matt.	Same as Matt.	Discourses with disciples, but *before* the Passover. Washes the disciples' feet. Nothing said of Holy Eucharist, nor of agony in Gethsemane. Malchus' ear. Led captive to Annas first. Then to Caiaphas. Denied by St. Peter.
FRIDAY.	FRIDAY.	FRIDAY.	FRIDAY.
Led to Pilate. Judas hangs himself. Tried. Condemned to death. Scourged and mocked. Led to crucifixion. Darkness from 12 to 3. Died at 3.	As Matthew, but hour of crucifixion given, 9 a.m.	Led to Pilate. Sent to Herod. Sent back to Pilate. Rest as in Matthew; but *one* malefactor repents.	Taken to Pilate. Jews would not enter, that they might eat the Passover. Scourged by Pilate before condemnation, and mocked. Shown by Pilate to Jews at 12.

At this point I broke down. I had been getting more and more uneasy and distressed as I went on, but when I found that the Jews would not go into the judgment hall lest they should be defiled, because they desired to eat the passover, having previously seen that Jesus had actually eaten the passover with his disciples the evening before; when after writing down that he was crucified at 9 a.m., and that

there was darkness over all the land from 12 to 3 p.m., I found that three hours after he was crucified he was standing in the judgment hall, and that at the very hour at which the miraculous darkness covered the earth; when I saw that I was writing a discord instead of a harmony, I threw down my pen and shut up my Bible. The shock of doubt was, however, only momentary. I quickly recognised it as a temptation of the devil, and I shrank back horror-striken and penitent for the momentary lapse of faith. I saw that these apparent contradictions were really a test of faith, and that there would be no credit in believing a thing in which there were no difficulties. *Credo quia impossibile*; I repeated Tertullian's words at first doggedly, at last triumphantly. I fasted as penance for my involuntary sin of unbelief. I remembered that the Bible must not be carelessly read, and that St. Peter had warned us that there were in it "some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest unto their own destruction". I shuddered at the "destruction" to the edge of which my unlucky "harmony" had drawn me, and resolved that I would never again venture on a task for which I was so evidently unfitted. Thus the first doubt was caused, and though swiftly trampled down, it had none the less raised its head. It was stifled, not answered, for all my religious training had led me to regard a doubt as a sin to be repented of, not examined. And it left in my mind the dangerous feeling that there were some things into which it was safer not to enquire too closely; things which must be accepted on faith, and not too narrowly scrutinised. The awful threat: "He that believeth not shall be damned," sounded in my ears, and, like the angel with the flaming sword, barred the path of all too curious enquiry.

V.

The spring ripened into summer in uneventful fashion, so far as I was concerned, the smooth current of my life flowing on untroubled, hard reading and merry play filling the happy days. I learned later that two or three offers of marriage reached my mother for me; but she answered

to each: "She is too young. I will not have her troubled." Of love-dreams I had absolutely none, partly, I expect, from the absence of fiery novels from my reading, partly because my whole dream-tendencies were absorbed by religion, and all my fancies ran towards a "religious life". I longed to spend my time in worshipping Jesus, and was, as far as my inner life was concerned, absorbed in that passionate love of "the Savior" which, among emotional Catholics, really is the human passion of love transferred to an ideal—for women to Jesus, for men to the Virgin Mary. In order to show that I am not here exaggerating, I subjoin a few of the prayers in which I found daily delight, and I do this in order to show how an emotional girl may be attracted by these so-called devotional exercises.

"O crucified Love, raise in me fresh ardors of love and consolation, that it may henceforth be the greatest torment I can endure ever to offend Thee; that it may be my greatest delight to please Thee."

"Let the remembrance of Thy death, O Lord Jesu, make me to desire and pant after Thee, that I may delight in Thy gracious presence."

"O most sweet Jesu Christ, I, unworthy sinner, yet redeemed by Thy precious blood. . . . . Thine I am and will be, in life and in death."

"O Jesu, beloved, fairer than the sons of men, draw me after Thee with the cords of Thy love."

"Blessed are Thou, O most merciful God, who didst vouchsafe to espouse me to the heavenly Bridegroom in the waters of baptism, and hast imparted Thy body and blood as a new gift of espousal and the meet consummation of Thy love."

"O most sweet Lord Jesu, transfix the affections of my inmost soul with that most joyous and most healthful wound of Thy love, with true, serene, most holy, apostolic charity; that my soul may ever languish and melt with entire love and longing for Thee. Let it desire Thee and faint for Thy courts; long to be dissolved and be with Thee."

"Oh, that I could embrace Thee with that most burning love of angels."

"Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth; for Thy love is better than wine. Draw me, we will run after Thee. The king hath brought me into his chambers. . . . . Let my soul, O Lord, feel the sweetness of Thy presence. May it taste how sweet Thou art. . . . . May the sweet and burning power of Thy love, I beseech Thee, absorb my soul."

To my dear mother this type of religious thought was revolting. But then, she was a woman who had been a wife and a devoted one, while I was a child awaking into womanhood, with emotions and passions dawning and not understood, emotions and passions which craved satisfaction, and found it in this "Ideal Man". Thousands of girls in England are to-day in exactly this mental phase, and it is a phase full of danger. In America it is avoided by a frank, open, unsentimental companionship between boys and girls, between young men and young women. In England, where this wisely free comradeship is regarded as "improper", the perfectly harmless and natural sexual feeling is either dwarfed or forced, and so we have "prudishness" and "fastness". The sweeter and more loving natures become prudes; the more shallow as well as the more high-spirited and merry natures become flirts. Often, as in my own case, the merry side finds its satisfaction in amusements that demand active physical exercise, while the loving side finds its joy in religious expansion, in which the idealised figure of Jesus becomes the object of passion, and the life of the nun becomes the ideal life, as being dedicated to that one devotion. To the girl, of course, this devotion is all that is most holy, most noble, most pure. But analysing it now, after it has long been a thing of the past, I cannot but regard it as a mere natural outlet for the dawning feelings of womanhood, certain to be the more intense and earnest as the nature is deep and loving.

One very practical and mischievous result of this religious feeling is the idealisation of all clergymen, as being the special messengers of, and the special means of communication with, the "Most High". The priest is surrounded by the halo of Deity. The power that holds the keys of heaven and of hell becomes the object of reverence and of awe. Far more lofty than any title bestowed by earthly monarch is that patent of nobility straight from the hand of the "King of kings", which seems to give to the mortal something of the authority of the immortal, to crown the head of the priest with the diadem which belongs to those who are "kings and priests unto God". Swayed by these feelings, the position of a clergyman's wife seems second only to that of the nun, and has therefore a wonderful attractiveness, an attractiveness in which

the particular clergyman affected plays a very subordinate part; it is the "sacred office", the nearness to "holy things", the consecration involved, which seem to make the wife a nearer worshipper than those who do not partake in the immediate "services of the altar"—it is all these that shed a glamor over the clerical life which attracts most those who are most apt to self-devotion, most swayed by imagination. I know how incomprehensible this will seem to many of my readers, but it is a fact none the less, and the saddest pity of it is that the glamor is most over those whose brains are quick and responsive to all forms of noble emotions, all suggestions of personal self-sacrifice; and if such later rise to the higher emotions whose shadows have attracted them, and to that higher self-sacrifice whose whispers reached them in their early youth, then the false prophet's veil is raised, and the life is either wrecked, or through storm-wind and surge of battling billows, with loss of mast and sail, is steered by firm hand into the port of a higher creed.

My mother, Minnie, and I passed the summer holidays at St. Leonards, and many a merry gallop had we over our favorite fields, I on a favorite black mare, Gipsy Queen, as full of life and spirits as I was myself, who danced gaily over ditch and hedge, thinking little of my weight, for I rode barely eight stone. At the end of those, our last free summer holidays, we returned as usual to Harrow, and shortly afterwards I went to Switzerland with some dear friends of ours named Roberts.

Everyone about Manchester will remember Mr. Roberts, the solicitor, the "poor man's lawyer". Close friend of Ernest Jones, and hand-in-hand with him through all his struggles, Mr. Roberts was always ready to fight a poor man's battle for him without fee, and to champion any worker unfairly dealt with. He worked hard in the agitation which saved women from working in the mines, and I have heard him tell how he had seen them toiling, naked to the waist, with short petticoats barely reaching to their knees, rough, foul-tongued, brutalised out of all womanly decency and grace; and how he had seen little children working there too, babies of three and four set to watch a door, and falling asleep at their work to be roused by curse and kick to the unfair toil. The old man's eye would begin to flash and his voice to rise as he told of these hor-

rors, and then his face would soften as he added that, after it was all over and the slavery was put an end to, as he went through a coal-district the women standing at their doors would lift up their children to see "Lawyer Roberts" go by, and would bid "God bless him" for what he had done. This dear old man was my first tutor in Radicalism, and I was an apt pupil. I had taken no interest in politics, but had unconsciously reflected more or less the decorous Whiggism which had always surrounded me. I regarded "the poor" as folk to be educated, looked after, charitably dealt with, and always treated with most perfect courtesy, the courtesy being due from me, as a lady, to all equally, whether they were rich or poor. But to Mr. Roberts "the poor" were the working-bees, the wealth producers, with a right to self-rule, not to looking after, with a right to justice, not to charity, and he preached his doctrines to me, in season and out of season. "What do you think of John Bright?" he demanded of me one day. "I have never thought of him at all," I answered lightly. "Isn't he a rather rough sort of man, who goes about making rows?" "There, I thought so," he broke out fiercely. "That's just what they say. I believe some of you fine ladies would not go to heaven if you had to rub shoulders with John Bright, the noblest man God ever gave to the cause of the poor." And then he launched out into stories of John Bright's work and John Bright's eloquence, and showed me the changes that work and eloquence had made in the daily lives of the people.

With Mr. Roberts, his wife, and two daughters, I went to Switzerland as the autumn drew near. It would be of little interest to tell how we went to Chamounix and worshipped Mont Blanc, how we crossed the Mer de Glace and the Mauvais Pas, how we visited the Monastery of St. Bernard (I losing my heart to the beautiful dogs), how we went by steamer down the lake of Thun, how we gazed at the Jungfrau and saw the exquisite Staubbach, how we visited Lausanne, and Berne, and Geneva, how we stood beside the wounded Lion, and shuddered in the dungeon of Chillon, how we walked distances we never should have attempted in England, how we younger ones lost ourselves on a Sunday afternoon, after ascending a mountain, and returned footsore and weary, to meet a party going out to seek us with lanterns and ropes. All these things have

been so often described that I will not add one more description to the list, nor dwell on that strange feeling of awe, of wonder, of delight, that everyone must have felt, when the glory of the peaks clad in "everlasting snow" is for the first time seen against the azure sky on the horizon, and you whisper to yourself, half breathless: "The Alps! The Alps!"

During that autumn I became engaged to the Rev. Frank Besant, giving up with a sigh of regret my dreams of the "religious life", and substituting for them the work which would have to be done as the wife of a priest, laboring ever in the church and among the poor. A queer view, some people may think, for a girl to take of married life, but it was the natural result of my living the life of the Early Church, of my enthusiasm for religious work. To me a priest was a half-angelic creature, whose whole life was consecrated to heaven; all that was deepest and truest in my nature chafed against my useless days, longed for work, yearned to devote itself, as I had read women saints had done, to the service of the church and the poor, to the battling against sin and misery. "You will have more opportunity for doing good as a clergyman's wife than as anything else," was one of the pleas urged on my reluctance. My ignorance of all that marriage meant was as profound as though I had been a child of four, and my knowledge of the world was absolutely *nil*. My darling mother meant all that was happiest for me when she shielded me from all knowledge of sorrow and of sin, when she guarded me from the smallest idea of the marriage relation, keeping me ignorant as a baby till I left her home a wife. But looking back now on all, I deliberately say that no more fatal blunder can be made than to train a girl to womanhood in ignorance of all life's duties and burdens, and then to let her face them for the first time away from all the old associations, the old helps, the old refuge on the mother's breast. That "perfect innocence" may be very beautiful, but it is a perilous possession, and Eve should have the knowledge of good and of evil ere she wanders forth from the paradise of a mother's love. When a word is never spoken to a girl that is not a caress; when necessary rebuke comes in tone of tenderest reproach; when "You have grieved me" has been the heaviest penalty for a youthful fault; when no anxiety has ever been allowed

to trouble the young heart—then, when the hothouse flower is transplanted, and rough winds blow on it, it droops and fades.

The spring and summer of 1867 passed over with little of incident, save one. We quitted Harrow, and the wrench was great. My brother had left school, and had gone to Cambridge; the master, who had lived with us for so long, had married and had gone to a house of his own; my mother thought that as she was growing older, the burden of management was becoming too heavy, and she desired to seek an easier life. She had saved money enough to pay for my brother's college career, and she determined to invest the rest of her savings in a house in St. Leonard's, where she might live for part of the year, letting the house during the season. She accordingly took and furnished a house in Warrior Square, and we moved thither, saying farewell to the dear Old Vicarage, and the friends loved for so many happy years.

At the end of the summer, my mother and I went down to Manchester, to pay a long visit to the Roberts's; a very pleasant time we passed there, a large part of mine being spent on horseback, either leaping over a bar in the meadow, or scouring the country far and wide. A grave break, however, came in our mirth. The Fenian troubles were then at their height. On September 11th, Colonel Kelly and Captain Deasy, two Fenian leaders, were arrested in Manchester, and the Irish population was at once thrown into a terrible ferment. On the 18th, the police van containing them was returning from the Court to the County Gaol at Salford, and as it reached the railway arch which crosses the Hyde Road at Bellevue, a man sprang out, shot one of the horses, and thus stopped the van. In a moment it was surrounded by a small band, armed with revolvers and with crowbars, and the crowbars were wrenching at the locked door. A reinforcement of police was approaching, and there was no time to be lost. The rescuers called to Brett, a sergeant of police who was in charge inside the van, to pass the keys out, and, on his refusal, there was a cry: "Blow off the lock!". The muzzle of a revolver was placed against the lock, and the revolver was discharged. Unhappily, poor Brett had stooped down to try and see through the keyhole what was going on outside, and the bullet, fired to blow open the lock, entered his head, and

he fell dying on the floor. The rescuers rushed in, and one Allen, a lad of seventeen, opened the doors of the compartments in which were Kelly and Deasy, and hurriedly pulled them out. Two or three of the band, gathering round them, carried them off across the fields to a place of safety, while the rest gallantly threw themselves between their rescued friends and the strong body of police which charged down after the fugitives. With their revolvers pointed, they kept back the police, until they saw that the two Fenian leaders were beyond all chance of capture, and then they scattered, flying in all directions. Young William Allen, whose one thought had been for his chiefs, was the earliest victim. As he fled, he raised his hand and fired his revolver straight in the air; he had been ready to use it in defence of others, he would not shed blood for himself. Disarmed by his own act, he was set upon by the police, brutally struck down, kicked and stoned by his pursuers, and then, bruised and bleeding, he was dragged off to gaol, to meet there some of his comrades in much the same plight. The whole city of Manchester went mad over the story, and the fiercest race-passions at once blazed out into flame; it became dangerous for an Irish workman to be alone in a group of Englishmen, for an Englishman to venture into the Irish quarter of the city. The friends of the arrested Irishmen went straight to "Lawyer Roberts", and begged his aid, and he threw himself heart and soul into their defence. He soon found that the man who had fired the fatal shot was safe out of the way, having left Manchester at once, and he trusted that it would at least be possible to save his clients from the death-penalty. A Special Commission was issued, with Mr. Justice Blackburn at its head. "They are going to send that hanging judge," groaned Mr. Roberts when he heard it, and we felt there was small chance of escape for the prisoners. He struggled hard to have the *venue* of the trial changed, protesting that in the state of excitement in which Manchester was, there was no chance of obtaining an impartial jury. But the cry for blood and for revenge was ringing through the air, and of fairness and impartiality there was no chance. On the 25th of October, the prisoners were actually brought up before the magistrates *in irons*, and Mr. Ernest Jones, the counsel briefed to defend them, after a vain protest against the monstrous outrage, threw down his brief and

quitted the Court. The trial was hurried on, and on October 29th, Allen, Larkin, Gould (O'Brien), Maguire, and Condon, stood before their judges.

We drove up to the court; the streets were barricaded; soldiers were under arms; every approach was crowded by surging throngs. At last, our carriage was stopped in the midst of excited Irishmen, and fists were shaken in the window, curses levelled at the "d——d English who were going to see the boys murdered". For a moment things were uncomfortable, for we were five women of helpless type. Then I bethought myself that we were unknown, and, like the saucy girl I was, I leant forward and touched the nearest fist. "Friends, these are Mr. Roberts' wife and daughters." "Roberts! Lawyer Roberts! God bless Roberts. Let his carriage through." And all the scowling faces became smile-wreathen, and cheers sounded out for curses, and a road was cleared for us to the steps.

Very sad was that trial. On the first day Mr. Roberts got himself into trouble which threatened to be serious. He had briefed Mr. Digby Seymour, Q.C. as leader, with Mr. Ernest Jones, for the defence, and he did not think that the jurymen proposed were challenged as they should be. We knew that many whose names were called were men who had proclaimed their hostility to the Irish, and despite the wrath of Judge Blackburn, Mr. Roberts would jump up and challenge them. In vain he threatened to commit the sturdy solicitor. "These men's lives are at stake, my lord," he said indignantly. At last the officers of the court were sharply told: "Remove that man," but as they advanced reluctantly—for all poor men loved and honored him—Judge Blackburn changed his mind and let him remain. At last the jury was empanelled, containing one man who had loudly proclaimed that he "didn't care what the evidence was, he would hang every d——d Irishman of the lot". In fact, the verdict was a foregone conclusion. The most disreputable evidence was admitted; the suppositions of women of lowest character were accepted as conclusive; the *alibi* for Maguire—clearly proved, and afterwards accepted by the Crown, a free pardon being issued on the strength of it—was rejected with dogged obstinacy; how premeditated was the result may be guessed from the fact that I saw—with what shuddering horror may be estimated—some official in the room behind the

judges' chairs, quietly preparing the black caps before the verdict had been given. The verdict of "Guilty" was repeated in each of the five cases, and the prisoners were asked by the presiding judge if they had anything to say why sentence should not be passed on them. Allen spoke briefly and bravely; he had not fired a shot, but he had helped to free Kelly and Deasy; he was willing to die for Ireland. The others followed in turn, Maguire protesting his innocence, and Condon declaring also that he was not present (he also was reprieved). Then the sentence of death was passed, and "God save Ireland"! rang out in five clear voices in answer from the dock.

We had a sad scene that night; the young girl to whom poor Allen was engaged was heartbroken at her lover's doom, and bitter were her cries to "save my William!". No protests, no pleas, however, availed to mitigate the doom, and on November 23rd, Allen, Larkin, and O'Brien were hanged outside Salford gaol. Had they striven for freedom in Italy, England would have honored them as heroes; here she buried them as common murderers in quicklime in the prison yard.

I have found, with a keen sense of pleasure, that Mr. Bradlaugh and myself were in 1867 to some extent co-workers, although we knew not of each other's existence, and although he was doing much, and I only giving such poor sympathy as a young girl might, who was only just awakening to the duty of political work. I read in the *National Reformer* for November 24, 1867, that in the preceding week, he was pleading on Clerkenwell Green for these men's lives:

"According to the evidence at the trial, Deasy and Kelly were illegally arrested. They had been arrested for vagrancy of which no evidence was given, and apparently remanded for felony without a shadow of justification. He had yet to learn that in England the same state of things existed as in Ireland; he had yet to learn that an illegal arrest was sufficient ground to detain any of the citizens of any country in the prisons of this one. If he were illegally held, he was justified in using enough force to procure his release. Wearing a policeman's coat gave no authority when the officer exceeded his jurisdiction. He had argued this before Lord Chief Justice Erle in the Court of Common Pleas, and that learned judge did not venture to contradict the argument which he submitted. There was another reason why they should spare these men, although he

hardly expected the Government to listen, because the Government sent down one of the judges who was predetermined to convict the prisoners; it was that the offence was purely a political one. The death of Brett was a sad mischance, but no one who read the evidence could regard the killing of Brett as an intentional murder. Legally, it was murder; morally, it was homicide in the rescue of a political captive. If it were a question of the rescue of the political captives of Varignano, or of political captives in Bourbon, in Naples, or in Poland, or in Paris, even earls might be found so to argue. Wherein is our sister Ireland less than these? In executing these men, they would throw down the gauntlet for terrible reprisals. It was a grave and solemn question. It had been said by a previous speaker that they were prepared to go to any lengths to save these Irishmen. They were not. He wished they were. If they were, if the men of England, from one end to the other, were prepared to say, "These men shall not be executed," they would not be. He was afraid they had not pluck enough for that. Their moral courage was not equal to their physical strength. Therefore he would not say that they were prepared to do so. They must plead *ad misericordiam*. He appealed to the press, which represented the power of England; to that press which in its panic-stricken moments had done much harm, and which ought now to save these four doomed men. If the press demanded it, no Government would be mad enough to resist. The memory of the blood which was shed in 1798 rose up like a bloody ghost against them to-day. He only feared that what they said upon the subject might do the poor men more harm than good. If it were not so, he would coin words that should speak in words of fire. As it was, he could only say to the Government: You are strong to-day; you hold these men's lives in your hands; but if you want to reconcile their country to you, if you want to win back Ireland, if you want to make her children love you—then do not embitter their hearts still more by taking the lives of these men. Temper your strength with mercy; do not use the sword of justice like one of vengeance; for the day may come when it shall be broken in your hands, and you yourselves brained by the hilt of the weapon you have so wickedly wielded."

In October he had printed a plea for Ireland, strong and earnest, asking:—

"Where is our boasted English freedom when you cross to Kingstown pier? Where has it been for near two years? The Habeas Corpus Act suspended, the gaols crowded, the steamers searched, spies listening at shebeen shops for sedition, and the end of it a Fenian panic in England. Oh, before it be too late, before more blood shall stain the pages of our present history,

before we exasperate and arouse bitter animosities, let us try and do justice to our sister land. Abolish once and for all the land laws, which in their iniquitous operation have ruined her peasantry. Sweep away the leech-like Church which has sucked her vitality, and has given her back no word even of comfort in her degradation. Turn her barracks into flax mills, encourage a spirit of independence in her citizens, restore to her people the protection of the law, so that they may speak without fear of arrest, and beg them to plainly and boldly state their grievances. Let a commission of the best and wisest amongst Irishmen, with some of our highest English judges added, sit solemnly to hear all complaints, and then let us honestly legislate, not for the punishment of the discontented, but to remove the causes of the discontent. It is not the Fenians who have depopulated Ireland's strength and increased her misery. It is not the Fenians who have evicted tenants by the score. It is not the Fenians who have checked cultivation. Those who have caused the wrong at least should frame the remedy."

VI.

In December, 1867, I was married at St. Leonards, and after a brief trip to Paris and Southsea, we went to Cheltenham, where Mr. Besant had obtained a mastership. We lived at first in lodgings, and as I was very much alone, my love for reading had full swing. Quietly to myself I fretted intensely for my mother, and for the daily sympathy and comradeship that had made my life so fair. In a strange town, among strangers, with a number of ladies visiting me who talked only of servants and babies—troubles of which I knew nothing—who were profoundly uninterested in everything that had formed my previous life, in theology, in politics, in questions of social reform, and who looked on me as "strange" because I cared more for the great struggles outside than for the discussions of a housemaid's young man, or the amount of "butter when dripping would have done perfectly well, my dear," used by the cook—under such circumstances it will not seem marvellous that I felt somewhat forlorn. I found refuge, however, in books, and energetically carried on my favorite studies; next, I thought I would try writing, and took up

two very different lines of composition; I wrote some short stories of a very flimsy type, and also a work of a much more ambitious character, "The Lives of the Black Letter Saints". For the sake of the unecclesiastically trained it may be well to mention that in the Calendar of the Church of England there are a number of Saints' Days; some of these are printed in red, and are Red Letter Days, for which services are appointed by the Church; others are printed in black, and are Black Letter Days, and have no special services fixed for them. It seemed to me that it would be interesting to take each of these days and write a sketch of the life of the saint belonging to it, and accordingly I set to work to do so, and gathered various books of history and legend wherefrom to collect my "facts". I don't in the least know what became of that valuable book; I tried Macmillans with it, and it was sent on by them to someone who was preparing a series of church books for the young; later I had a letter from a Church brotherhood offering to publish it, if I would give it as an "act of piety" to their order; its ultimate fate is to me unknown.

The short stories were more fortunate. I sent the first to the *Family Herald*, and some weeks afterwards received a letter from which dropped a cheque as I opened it. Dear me! I have earned a good deal of money since by my pen, but never any that gave me the intense delight of that first thirty shillings. It was the first money I had ever earned, and the pride of the earning was added to the pride of authorship. In my childish delight and practical religion, I went down on my knees and thanked God for sending it to me, and I saw myself earning heaps of golden guineas, and becoming quite a support of the household. Besides, it was "my very own", I thought, and a delightful sense of independence came over me. I had not then realised the beauty of the English law, and the dignified position in which it placed the married woman; I did not understand that all a married woman earned by law belonged to her owner, and that she could have nothing that belonged to her of right.[1] I did not want the money: I was only so glad to have something of my own to give,

[1] This odious law has now been altered, and a married woman is a person, not a chattel.

and it was rather a shock to learn that it was not really mine at all.

From time to time after that, I earned a few pounds for stories in the same journal; and the *Family Herald*, let me say, has one peculiarity which should render it beloved by poor authors; it pays its contributor when it accepts the paper, whether it prints it immediately or not; thus my first story was not printed for some weeks after I received the cheque, and it was the same with all others accepted by the same journal. Encouraged by these small successes, I began writing a novel! It took a long time to do, but was at last finished, and sent off to the *Family Herald*. The poor thing came back, but with a kind note, telling me that it was too political for their pages, but that if I would write one of "purely domestic interest", and up to the same level, it would probably be accepted. But by that time I was in the full struggle of theological doubt, and that novel of "purely domestic interest" never got itself written.

I contributed further to the literature of my country a theological pamphlet, of which I forget the exact title, but it dealt with the duty of fasting incumbent on all faithful Christians, and was very patristic in its tone.

In January, 1869, my little son was born, and as I was very ill for some months before, and was far too much interested in the tiny creature afterwards, to devote myself to pen and paper, my literary career was checked for a while. The baby gave a new interest and a new pleasure to life, and as we could not afford a nurse I had plenty to do in looking after his small majesty. My energy in reading became less feverish when it was done by the side of the baby's cradle, and the little one's presence almost healed the abiding pain of my mother's loss.

I may pass very quickly over the next two years. In August, 1870, a little sister was born to my son, and the recovery was slow and tedious, for my general health had been failing for some time. I was, among other things, fretting much about my mother, who was in sore trouble. A lawyer in whom she had had the most perfect confidence betrayed it; for years she had paid all her large accounts through him, and she had placed her money in his hands. Suddenly he was discovered by his partners to have been behaving unfairly; the crash came, and my mother found

that all the money given by her for discharge of liabilities had vanished, while the accounts were unpaid, and that she was involved in debt to a very serious extent. The shock was a very terrible one to her, for she was too old to begin the world afresh. She sold off all she had, and used the money, as far as it would go, to pay the debts she believed to have been long ago discharged, and she was thus left penniless after thinking she had made a little competence for her old age. Lord Hatherley's influence obtained for my brother the post of under-secretary to the Society of Arts, and also some work from the Patent Office, and my mother went to live with him. But the dependence was intolerable to her, though she never let anyone but myself know she suffered, and even I, until her last illness, never knew how great her suffering had been. The feeling of debt weighed on her, and broke her heart; all day long while my mother was at his office, through the bitter winter weather, she would sit without a fire, lighting it only a little before his home-coming, so that she might save all the expense she could; often and often she would go out about half-past twelve, saying that she was going out to lunch, and would walk about till late in the afternoon, so as to avoid the lunch-hour at home. I have always felt that the winter of 1870–1 killed her, though she lived on for three years longer; it made her an old broken woman, and crushed her brave spirit. How often I have thought since: "If only I had not left her! I should have seen she was suffering, and should have saved her." One little chance help I gave her, on a brief visit to town. She was looking very ill, and I coaxed out of her that her back was always aching, and that she never had a moment free from pain. Luckily I had that morning received a letter containing £2 2s. from my liberal *Family Herald* editor, and as, glancing round the room, I saw there were only ordinary chairs, I disregarded all questions as to the legal ownership of the money, and marched out without saying a word, and bought for £1 15s. a nice cushiony chair, just like one she used to have at Harrow, and had it sent home to her. For a moment she was distressed, but I told her I had earned the money, and so she was satisfied. "Oh, the rest!" she said softly once or twice during the evening. I have that chair still, and mean to keep it as long as I live.

In the spring of 1871 both my children were taken ill with hooping-cough. The boy, Digby, vigorous and merry, fought his way through it with no danger, and with comparatively little suffering; Mabel, the baby, had been delicate since her birth; there had been some little difficulty in getting her to breathe after she was born, and a slight tendency afterwards to lung-delicacy. She was very young for so trying a disease as hooping-cough, and after a while bronchitis set in, and was followed by congestion of the lungs. For weeks she lay in hourly peril of death; we arranged a screen round the fire like a tent, and kept it full of steam to ease the panting breath, and there I sat all through those weary weeks with her on my lap, day and night. The doctor said that recovery was impossible, and that in one of the fits of coughing she must die; the most distressing thing was that at last the giving of a drop or two of milk brought on the terrible convulsive choking, and it seemed cruel to torture the apparently dying child. At length, one morning when the doctor was there, he said that she could not last through the day; I had sent for him hurriedly, for her body had swollen up rapidly, and I did not know what had happened; the pleura of one lung had become perforated, and the air escaping into the cavity of the chest had caused the swelling; while he was there, one of the fits of coughing came on, and it seemed as though it would be the last; the doctor took a small bottle of chloroform out of his pocket, and putting a drop on a handkerchief, held it near the child's face, till the drug soothed the convulsive struggle. "It can't do any harm at this stage," he said, "and it checks the suffering." He went away, saying that he would return in the afternoon, but he feared he would never see the child alive again. One of the kindest friends I had in my married life was that same doctor, Mr. Lauriston Winterbotham; he was as good as he was clever, and, like so many of his noble profession, he had the merits of discretion and of silence.

That chance thought of his about the chloroform, verily, I believe, saved the child's life. Whenever one of the convulsive fits was coming on I used it, and so not only prevented to a great extent the violence of the attacks, but also the profound exhaustion that followed them, when the baby would lie as though almost dead, a mere flicker

of breath at the top of the throat showing that she still lived. At last, though more than once we had thought her dead, a change took place for the better, and the child began slowly to mend. For years, however, that struggle for life left its traces on her, not only in serious lung-delicacy, but also in a form of epileptic fits. In her play she would suddenly stop, and become fixed for about a minute, and then go on again as though nothing had occurred. On her mother a more permanent trace was left.

Not unnaturally, when the child was out of danger, I collapsed from sheer exhaustion, and I lay in bed for a week. But an important change of mind dated from those silent weeks with a dying child on my knees. There had grown up in my mind a feeling of angry resentment against the God who had been for weeks, as I thought, torturing my helpless baby. For some months a stubborn antagonism to the Providence who ordained the sufferings of life had been steadily increasing in me, and this sullen challenge, "Is God good?" found voice in my heart during those silent nights and days. My mother's sufferings, and much personal unhappiness, had been intensifying the feeling, and as I watched my baby in its agony, and felt so helpless to relieve, more than once the indignant cry broke from my lips: "How canst thou torture a baby so? What has she done that she should suffer so? Why dost thou not kill her at once, and let her be at peace?" More than once I cried aloud: "O God, take the child, but do not torment her." All my personal belief in God, all my intense faith in his constant direction of affairs, all my habit of continual prayer and of realisation of his presence, were against me now. To me he was not an abstract idea, but a living reality, and all my mother-heart rose up in rebellion against this person in whom I believed, and whose individual finger I saw in my baby's agony.

At this time I met a clergyman—I do not give his name lest I should injure him—whose wider and more liberal views of Christianity exercised much influence over me during the months of struggle that followed. Mr. Besant had brought him to me while the child was at her worst, and I suppose something of the "Why is it?" had, unconsciously to me, shown itself to his keen eyes. On the day after his visit, I received from him the following

letter, in which unbeliever as well as believer may recognise the deep human sympathy and noble nature of the writer:—

"April 21st, 1871.

"MY DEAR MRS. BESANT,—I am painfully conscious that I gave you but little help in your trouble yesterday. It is needless to say that it was not from want of sympathy. Perhaps it would be nearer the truth to say that it was from excess of sympathy. I shrink intensely from meddling with the sorrow of anyone whom I feel to be of a sensitive nature.

'The heart hath its own bitterness, and the stranger meddleth not therewith.'

It is to me a positively fearful thought that I might awake such a reflection as

'And common was the common place,
And vacant chaff well meant for grain'.

Conventional consolations, conventional verses out of the Bible, and conventional prayers are, it seems to me, an intolerable aggravation of suffering. And so I acted on a principle that I mentioned to your husband, that 'there is no power so great as that of one human faith looking upon another human faith'. The promises of God, the love of Christ for little children, and all that has been given to us of hope and comfort, are as deeply planted in your heart as in mine, and I did not care to quote them. But when I talk face to face with one who is in sore need of them, my faith in them suddenly becomes so vast and heart-stirring that I think I must help most by talking naturally, and letting the faith find its own way from soul to soul. Indeed I could not find words for it if I tried. And yet I am compelled, as a messenger of the glad tidings of God, to solemnly assure you that all is well. We have no key to the 'Mystery of Pain', excepting the Cross of Christ. But there is another and a deeper solution in the hands of our Father. And it will be ours when we can understand it. There is—in the place to which we travel—some blessed explanation of your baby's pain and your grief, which will fill with light the darkest heart. Now you must believe without having seen; that is true faith. You must

'Reach a hand through time to catch
The far-off interest of tears'.

That you may have strength so to do is part of your share in the prayers of yours very faithfully, W. D——."

During the summer months I saw much of this clergy-

man, Mr. D—— and his wife. We grew into closer intimacy in consequence of the dangerous illness of their only child, a beautiful boy a few months old. I had gained quite a name in Cheltenham as a nurse—my praises having been sung by the doctor—and Mrs. D—— felt she could trust me even with her darling boy while she snatched a night's sorely needed rest. My questionings were not shirked by Mr. D——, nor discouraged; he was neither horrified nor sanctimoniously rebuking, but met them all with a wide comprehension inexpressibly soothing to one writhing in the first agony of real doubt. The thought of hell was torturing me; somehow out of the baby's pain through those seemingly endless hours had grown a dim realisation of what hell might be, full of the sufferings of the beloved, and my whole brain and heart revolted from the unutterable cruelty of a creating and destroying God. Mr. D—— lent me Maurice and Robertson, and strove to lead me into their wider hope for man, their more trustful faith in God.

Everyone who has doubted after believing knows how, after the first admitted and recognised doubt, others rush in like a flood, and how doctrine after doctrine starts up in new and lurid light, looking so different in aspect from the fair faint outlines in which it had shone forth in the soft mists of faith. The presence of evil and pain in the world made by a "good God", and the pain falling on the innocent, as on my seven months' old babe; the pain here reaching on into eternity unhealed; these, while I yet believed, drove me desperate, and I believed and hated, instead of like the devils, "believed and trembled". Next, I challenged the righteousness of the doctrine of the Atonement, and while I worshipped and clung to the suffering Christ, I hated the God who required the death-sacrifice at his hands. And so for months the turmoil went on, the struggle being all the more terrible for the very desperation with which I strove to cling to some planks of the wrecked ship of faith on the tossing sea of doubt.

After Mr. D—— left Cheltenham, as he did in the early autumn of 1871, he still aided me in my mental struggles. He had advised me to read McLeod Campbell's work on the Atonement, as one that would meet many of the difficulties that lay on the surface of the orthodox view, and in

answer to a letter dealing with this really remarkable work, he wrote (Nov. 22, 1871):

"(1) The two passages on pp. 25 and 108 you doubtless interpret quite rightly. In your third reference to pp. 117, 188, you forget one great principle—that God is impassive; cannot suffer. Christ, quâ *God*, did not suffer, but as Son of *Man* and in his *humanity*. Still, it may be correctly stated that He felt to sin and sinners 'as God eternally feels'—*i.e.*, *abhorrence of sin and love of the sinner*. But to infer from that that the Father in his Godhead feels the sufferings which Christ experienced solely in humanity, and because incarnate, is, I think, wrong.

"(2) I felt strongly inclined to blow you up for the last part of your letter. You assume, I think quite gratuitously, that God condemns the major part of his children to objectless future suffering. You say that if he does not, he places a book in their hands which threatens what he does not mean to inflict. But how utterly this seems to me opposed to the gospel of Christ. All Christ's reference to eternal punishment may be resolved into reference to the Valley of Hinnom, by way of imagery; with the exception of the Dives parable, where is distinctly inferred a moral amendment beyond the grave. I speak of the unselfish desire of Dives to save his brothers. The more I see of the controversy the more baseless does the eternal punishment theory appear. It seems, then, to me, that instead of feeling aggrieved and shaken, you ought to feel encouraged and thankful that God is so much better than you were taught to believe him. You will have discovered by this time, in Maurice's 'What is Revelation' (I suppose you have the 'Sequel' too?) that God's truth *is* our truth, and his love is our love, only more perfect and full. There is no position more utterly defeated in modern philosophy and theology, than Dean Mansel's attempt to show that God's justice, love, etc., are different in kind from ours. Mill and Maurice, from totally alien points of view, have shown up the preposterous nature of the notion.

"(3) A good deal of what you have thought is, I fancy, based on a strange forgetfulness of your former experience. If you have known Christ (whom to know is eternal life)—and that you have known him I am certain—can you really say that a few intellectual difficulties, nay, a few moral difficulties if you will, are able at once to obliterate the testimony of that higher state of being?

"Why, the keynote of all my theology is that Christ is loveable because, and *just* because, he is the perfection of all that I know to be noble and generous, and loving, and tender, and true. If an angel from heaven brought me a gospel which

contained doctrines that would not stand the test of such perfect loveableness—doctrines hard, or cruel, or unjust—I should reject him and his trumpery gospel with scorn, knowing that neither could be Christ's.

"Know Christ and judge religions by him; don't judge him by religions, and then complain because you find yourself looking at him through a blood-colored glass. . . . .

"I am saturating myself with Maurice, who is the antidote given by God to this age against all dreary doubtings and temptings of the devil to despair."

On these lines weary strife went on for months, until at last brain and health gave way completely, and for weeks I lay prostrate and helpless, in terrible ceaseless head-pain, unable to find relief in sleep. The doctor tried every form of relief in vain; he covered my head with ice, he gave me opium—which only drove me mad—he used every means his skill could dictate to remove the pain, but all failed. At last he gave up the attempt to cure physically, and tried mental diversion; he brought me up books on anatomy and persuaded me to study them; I have still an analysis made by me at that time of Luther Holden's "Human Osteology". He was wise enough to see that if I were to be brought back to reasonable life, it could only be by diverting thought from the currents in which it had been running to a dangerous extent.

No one who has not felt it knows the fearful agony caused by doubt to the earnestly religious mind. There is in this life no other pain so horrible. The doubt seems to shipwreck everything, to destroy the one steady gleam of happiness "on the other side" that no earthly storm could obscure; to make all life gloomy with a horror of despair, a darkness that may verily be felt. Fools talk of Atheism as the outcome of foul life and vicious thought. They, in their shallow heartlessness, their brainless stupidity, cannot even dimly imagine the anguish of the mere penumbra of the eclipse of faith, much less the horror of that great darkness in which the orphaned soul cries out into the infinite emptiness: "Is it a Devil who has made this world? Are we the sentient toys of an Almighty Power, who sports with our agony, and whose peals of awful mocking laughter echo the wailings of our despair?"

VII.

On recovering from that prostrating physical pain, I came to a very definite decision. I resolved that, whatever might be the result, I would take each dogma of the Christian religion, and carefully and thoroughly examine it, so that I should never again say "I believe" where I had not proved. So, patiently and steadily, I set to work. Four problems chiefly at this time pressed for solution. I. The eternity of punishment after death. II. The meaning of "goodness" and "love" as applied to a God who had made this world with all its evil and its misery. III. The nature of the atonement of Christ, and the "justice" of God in accepting a vicarious suffering from Christ, and a vicarious righteousness from the sinner. IV. The meaning of "inspiration" as applied to the Bible, and the reconciliation of the perfection of the author with the blunders and the immoralities of the work.

Maurice's writings now came in for very careful study, and I read also those of Robertson, of Brighton, and of Stopford Brooke, striving to find in these some solid ground whereon I might build up a new edifice of faith. That ground, however, I failed to find; there were poetry, beauty, enthusiasm, devotion; but there was no rock on which I might take my stand. Mansel's Bampton lectures on "The Limits of Religious Thought" deepened and intensified my doubts. His arguments seemed to make certainty impossible, and I could not suddenly turn round and believe to order, as he seemed to recommend, because proof was beyond reach. I could not, and would not, adore in God as the highest Righteousness that which in man was condemned as harsh, as cruel, and as unjust.

In the midst of this long mental struggle, a change occured in the outward circumstances of my life. I wrote to Lord Hatherley and asked him if he could give Mr. Besant a Crown living, and he offered us first one in Northumberland, near Alnwick Castle, and then one in Lincolnshire, the village of Sibsey, with a vicarage house, and an income of £410 per annum. We decided to accept the latter.

The village was scattered over a considerable amount of

ground, but the work was not heavy. The church was one of the fine edifices for which the fen country is so famous, and the vicarage was a comfortable house, with large and very beautiful gardens and paddock, and with outlying fields. The people were farmers and laborers, with a sprinkling of shopkeepers; the only "society" was that of the neighboring clergy, Tory and prim to an appalling extent. There was here plenty of time for study, and of that time I vigorously availed myself. But no satisfactory light came to me, and the suggestions and arguments of my friend Mr. D—— failed to bring conviction to my mind. It appeared clear to me that the doctrine of Eternal Punishment was taught in the Bible, and the explanations given of the word "eternal" by men like Maurice and Stanley, did not recommend themselves to me as anything more than skilful special pleading—evasions, not clearings up, of a moral difficulty. For the problem was: Given a good God, how can he have created mankind, knowing beforehand that the vast majority of those whom he had created were to be tortured for evermore? Given a just God, how can he punish people for being sinful, when they have inherited a sinful nature without their own choice and of necessity? Given a righteous God, how can he allow sin to exist for ever, so that evil shall be as eternal as good, and Satan shall reign in hell, as long as Christ in Heaven? The answer of the Broad church school was, that the word "eternal" applied only to God and to life which was one with his; that "everlasting" only meant "lasting for an age", and that while the punishment of the wicked might endure for ages it was purifying, not destroying, and at last all should be saved, and "God should be all in all". These explanations had (for a time) satisfied Mr. D——, and I find him writing to me in answer to a letter of mine dated March 25th, 1872:

"On the subject of Eternal punishment I have now not the remotest doubt. It is impossible to handle the subject exhaustively in a letter, with a sermon to finish before night. But you *must* get hold of a few valuable books that would solve all kinds of difficulties for you. For most points read Stopford Brooke's Sermons—they are simply magnificent, and are called (1) Christian modern life, (2) Freedom in the Church of England, (3) and (least helpful) 'Sermons'. Then again there is an appendix to Llewellyn Davies' 'Manifestation of the Son of

God', which treats of forgiveness in a future state as related to Christ and Bible. As to that special passage about the Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost (to which you refer), I will write you my notions on it in a future letter."

A little later, according, he wrote:

"With regard to your passage of difficulty about the unpardonable sin, I would say: (1) If that sin is not to be forgiven in the world to come, it is implied that all other sins *are forgiven in the world to come.* (2) You must remember that our Lord's parables and teachings mainly concerned contemporary events and people. I mean, for instance, that in his great prophecy of *judgment* he simply was speaking of the destruction of the Jewish polity and nation. The *principles* involved apply through all time, but He did not apply them except to the Jewish nation. He was speaking then, not of 'the end of the *world*, (as is wrongly translated), but of 'the end of the *age*'. (Every age is wound up with a judgment. French Revolutions, Reformations, etc., are all ends of ages and judgments.) αἰων does not, cannot, will not, and never did mean *world*, but *age.* Well, then, he has been speaking of the Jewish people. And he says that all words spoken against the Son of Man will be forgiven. But there is a blasphemy against the Holy Spirit of God—there is a confusion of good with evil, of light with darkness—which goes deeper down than this. When a nation has lost the faculty of distinguishing love from hatred, the spirit of falsehood and hypocrisy from the spirit of truth, God from the Devil—*then its doom is pronounced*—the decree is gone forth against it. As the doom of Judaism, guilty of this sin, *was then* pronounced. As the *decree against it had already gone forth. It is a national warning, not an individual one. It applies to two ages of this world, and not to two worlds.* All its teaching was primarily *national*, and is only thus to be rightly read—if not all, rather *most of it.* If you would be sure of this and understand it, see the parables, etc., explained in Maurice's 'Gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven' (a commentary on S. Luke). I can only indicate briefly in a letter the line to be taken on this question.

"With regard to the ελοι, ελοι, λαμα σαββαχθανι. I don't believe that the Father even momentarily hid his face from Him. The life of sonship was unbroken. Remark: (1) It is a quotation from a Psalm. (2) It rises naturally to a suffering man's lips as expressive of agony, though not exactly framed for *his* individual *agony.* (3) The spirit of the Psalm is one of trust, and hope, and full faith, notwithstanding the 1st verse. (4) Our Lord's agony was very extreme, not merely of body but of *soul.* He spoke out of the desolation of one forsaken, not by his divine Father but by his human brothers. I have

heard sick and dying men use the words of beloved Psalms in just such a manner.

"The impassibility of God (1) With regard to the Incarnation, this presents no difficulty. Christ suffered simply and entirely as man, was too truly a man not to do so. (2) With regard to the Father, the key of it is here. 'God *is* love.' He does not need suffering to train into sympathy, because his nature is sympathy. He can afford to dispense with hysterics, because he sees ahead that his plan is working to the perfect result. I am not quite sure whether I have hit upon your difficulty here, as I have destroyed your last letter but one. But the 'Gospel of the Kingdom' is a wonderful 'eye-opener'."

Worst of all the puzzles, perhaps, was that of the existence of evil and of misery, and the racking doubt whether God *could* be good, and yet look on the evil and the misery of the world unmoved and untouched. It seemed so impossible to believe that a Creator could be either cruel enough to be indifferent to the misery, or weak enough to be unable to stop it: the old dilemma faced me unceasingly. "If he can prevent it, and does not, he is not good; if he wishes to prevent it, and cannot, he is not almighty;" and out of this I could find no way of escape. Not yet had any doubt of the existence of God crossed my mind.

In August, 1872 Mr. D —— tried to meet this difficulty. He wrote:

"With regard to the impassibility of God, I think there is a stone wrong among your foundations which causes your difficulty. Another wrong stone is, I think, your view of the nature of the *sin* and *error* which is supposed to grieve God. I take it that sin is an absolutely necessary factor in the production of the perfect man, It was foreseen and allowed as a means to an end—as in fact an *education*.

"The view of all the sin and misery in the world cannot grieve God, any more than it can grieve you to see Digby fail in his first attempt to build a card-castle or a rabbit-hutch. All is part of the training. God looks at the ideal man to which all tends. The popular idea of the fall is to me a very absurd one. There was never an ideal state in the past, but there will be in the future. The Genesis allegory simply typifies the first awakening of consciousness of good and evil—of two *wills* in a mind hitherto only animal-psychic.

"Well then—there being no occasion for grief in watching the progress of his own perfect and unfailing plans—your difficulty in God's impassibility vanishes. Christ, *quâ* God, was, of course, impassible too. It seems to me that your position im-

plies that God's 'designs' have partially (at least) failed, and hence the grief of perfect benevolence. Now I stoutly deny that any jot or tittle of God's plans can fail. I believe in the ordering of all for the best. I think that the pain consequent on broken law is only an inevitable necessity, over which we shall some day rejoice.

"The indifference shown to God's love cannot pain Him. Why? because it is simply a sign of defectiveness in the creature which the ages will rectify. The being who is indifferent is not yet educated up to the point of love. But he *will be*. The pure and holy suffering of Christ was (pardon me) *wholly* the consequence of his human nature. True it was because of the *perfection* of his humanity. But his Divinity had nothing to do with it. It was his *human heart* that broke. It was because he entered a world of broken laws and of incomplete education that he became involved in suffering with the rest of his race. . . . .

"No, Mrs. Besant; I never feel at all inclined to give up the search, or to suppose that the other side may be right. I claim no merit for it, but I have an invincible faith in the morality of God and the moral order of the world. I have no more doubt about the falsehood of the popular theology than I have about the unreality of six robbers who attacked me three nights ago in a horrid dream. I exult and rejoice in the grandeur and freedom of the little bit of truth it has been given me to see. I am told that 'Present-day Papers', by Bishop Ewing (edited) are a wonderful help, many of them, to puzzled people: I mean to get them. But I am sure you will find that the truth will (even so little as we may be able to find out) grow on you, make you free, light your path, and dispel, at no distant time, your *painful* difficulties and doubts. I should say on no account give up your reading. I think with you that you could not do without it. It will be a wonderful source of help and peace to you. For there are struggles far more fearful than those of intellectual doubt. I am keenly alive to the gathered-up sadness of which your last two pages are an expression. I was sorrier than I can say to read them. They reminded me of a long and very dark time in my own life, when I thought the light never would come. Thank God it came, or I think I could not have held out much longer. But you have evidently strength to bear it now. The more dangerous time, I should fancy, has passed. You will have to mind that the fermentation leaves clear spiritual wine, and not (as too often) vinegar.

"I wish I could write something more helpful to you in this great matter. But as I sit in front of my large bay window, and see the shadows on the grass and the sunlight on the leaves, and the soft glimmer of the rosebuds left by the storms, I cannot but believe that all will be very well. 'Trust in the

Lord; wait patiently for him'—they are trite words. But he made the grass, the leaves, the rosebuds, and the sunshine, and he is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And now the trite words have swelled into a mighty argument."

Despite reading and argument, my scepticism grew only deeper and deeper. The study of W. R. Greg's "Creed of Christendom", of Matthew Arnold's "Literature and Dogma", helped to widen the mental horizon, while making a return to the old faith more and more impossible. The church services were a weekly torture, but feeling as I did that I was only a doubter, I spoke to none of my doubts. It was possible, I felt, that all my difficulties might be cleared up, and I had no right to shake the faith of others while in uncertainty myself. Others had doubted and had afterwards believed; for the doubter silence was a duty; the blinded had better keep their misery to themselves. I found some practical relief in parish work of a non-doctrinal kind, in nursing the sick, in trying to brighten a little the lot of the poor of the village. But here, again, I was out of sympathy with most of those around me. The movement among the agricultural laborers, due to the energy and devotion of Joseph Arch, was beginning to be talked of in the fens, and bitter were the comments of the farmers on it, while I sympathised with the other side. One typical case, which happened some months later, may stand as example of all. There was a young man, married, with two young children, who was wicked enough to go into a neighboring county to a "Union Meeting", and who was, further, wicked enough to talk about it when he returned. He became a marked man; no farmer would employ him. He tramped about vainly, looking for work, grew reckless, and took to drink. Visiting his cottage one day I found his wife ill, a dead child in the bed, a sick child in her arms; yes, she "was pining; there was no work to be had". "Why did she leave the dead child on the bed? because there was no other place to put it." The cottage consisted of one room and a "lean-to", and husband and wife, the child dead of fever and the younger child sickening with it, were all obliged to lie on the one bed. In another cottage I found four generations sleeping in one room, the great-grandfather and his wife, the grandmother (unmarried), the mother (unmarried), and the little child, while three men-

lodgers completed the tale of eight human beings crowded into that narrow, ill-ventilated garret. Other cottages were hovels, through the broken roofs of which poured the rain, and wherein rheumatism and ague lived with the dwellers. How could I do aught but sympathise with any combination that aimed at the raising of these poor? But to sympathise with Joseph Arch was a crime in the eyes of the farmers, who knew that his agitation meant an increased drain on their pockets. For it never struck them that, if they paid less in rent to the absent landlord, they might pay more in wage to the laborers who helped to make their wealth, and they had only civil words for the burden that crushed them, and harsh ones for the builders-up of their ricks and the mowers of their harvests. They made common cause with their enemy, instead of with their friend, and instead of leaguing themselves with the laborers, as forming together the true agricultural interest, they leagued themselves with the landlords against the laborers, and so made fratricidal strife instead of easy victory over the common foe.

In the summer and autumn of 1872 I was a good deal in London with my mother. My health had much broken down, and after a severe attack of congestion of the lungs, my recovery was very slow. One Sunday in London, I wandered into St. George's Hall, in which Mr. Charles Voysey was preaching, and there I bought some of his sermons. To my delight I found that someone else had passed through the same difficulties as I about hell and the Bible and the atonement and the character of God, and had given up all these old dogmas, while still clinging to belief in God. I went to St. George's Hall again on the following Sunday, and in the little ante-room, after the service, I found myself in a stream of people, who were passing by Mr. and Mrs. Voysey, some evidently known to him, some strangers, many of the latter thanking him for his morning's work. As I passed in my turn I said: "I must thank you for very great help in what you have said this morning", for indeed the possibility opened of a God who was really "loving unto every man", and in whose care each was safe for ever, had come like a gleam of light across the stormy sea of doubt and distress on which I had been tossing for nearly twelve months. On the following Sunday, I saw them again,

and was cordially invited down to their Dulwich home, where they gave welcome to all in doubt. I soon found that the Theism they professed was free from the defects which revolted me in Christianity. It left me God as a Supreme Goodness, while rejecting all the barbarous dogmas of the Christian faith. I now read Theodore Parker's "Discourse on Religion", Francis Newman's "Hebrew Monarchy", and other works, many of the essays of Miss Frances Power Cobbe and of other Theistic writers, and I no longer believed in the old dogmas and hated while I believed; I no longer doubted whether they were true or not; I shook them off, once for all, with all their pain, and horror, and darkness, and felt, with relief and joy inexpressible, that they were all but the dreams of ignorant and semi-savage minds, not the revelation of a God. The last remnant of Christianity followed swiftly these cast-off creeds, though, in parting with this, one last pang was felt. It was the doctrine of the Deity of Christ. The whole teaching of the Broad Church School tends, of course, to emphasise the humanity at the expense of the Deity of Christ, and when the eternal punishment and the substitutionary atonement had vanished, there seemed to be no sufficient reason left for so stupendous a miracle as the incarnation of the Deity. I saw that the idea of incarnation was common to all Eastern creeds, not peculiar to Christianity; the doctrine of the unity of God repelled the doctrine of the incarnation of a portion of the Godhead. But the doctrine was dear from association; there was something at once soothing and ennobling in the idea of a union between Man and God, between a perfect man and divine supremacy, between a human heart and an almighty strength. Jesus as God was interwoven with all art, with all beauty in religion; to break with the Deity of Jesus was to break with music, with painting, with literature; the Divine Child in his mother's arms, the Divine Man in his Passion and in his triumph, the human friend encircled with the majesty of the Godhead—did inexorable Truth demand that this ideal figure, with all its pathos, its beauty, its human love, should pass into the Pantheon of the dead Gods of the Past?

VIII.

The struggle was a sharp one ere I could decide that intellectual honesty demanded that the question of the Deity of Christ should be analysed as strictly as all else, and that the conclusions come to from an impartial study of facts should be faced as steadily as though they dealt with some unimportant question. I was bound to recognise, however, that more than intellectual honesty would be here required, for if the result of the study were—as I dimly felt it would be—to establish disbelief in the supernatural claims of Christ, I could not but feel that such disbelief would necessarily entail most unpleasant external results. I might give up belief in all save this, and yet remain a member of the Church of England: views on Inspiration, on Eternal Torture, on the Vicarious Atonement, however heterodox, might be held within the pale of the Church; many broad church clergymen rejected these as decidedly as I did myself, and yet remained members of the Establishment; the judgment on "Essays and Reviews" gave this wide liberty to heresy within the Church, and a laywoman might well claim the freedom of thought legally bestowed on divines. The name "Christian" might well be worn while Christ was worshipped as God, and obeyed as the "Revealer of the Father's will", the "well-beloved Son", the "Savior and Lord of men". But once challenge that unique position, once throw off that supreme sovereignty, and then it seemed to me that the name "Christian" became a hypocrisy, and its renouncement a duty incumbent on an upright mind. But I was a clergyman's wife; my position made my participation in the Holy Communion a necessity, and my withdrawal therefrom would be an act marked and commented upon by all. Yet if I lost my faith in Christ, how could I honestly approach "the Lord's Table", where Christ was the central figure and the recipient of the homage paid there by every worshipper to "God made man"? Hitherto mental pain alone had been the price demanded inexorably from the searcher after truth; now to the inner would be added the outer warfare, and how could I tell how far this might carry me?

One night only I spent in this struggle over the question: "Shall I examine the claims to Deity of Jesus of Nazareth?". Whe nmorning broke the answer was clearly formulated: "Truth is greater than peace or position. If Jesus be God, challenge will not shake his Deity; if he be Man, it is blasphemy to worship him." I re-read Liddon's "Bampton Lectures" on this controversy and Renan's "Vie de Jésus". I studied the Gospels, and tried to represent to myself the life there outlined; I tested the conduct there given as I should have tested the conduct of any ordinary historical character; I noted that in the Synoptics no claim to Deity was made by Jesus himself, nor suggested by his disciples; I weighed his own answer to an enquirer, with its plain disavowal of Godhood: "Why callest thou me good? There is none good save one, that is God" (Matt. xix., 17); I conned over his prayers to "my Father", his rest on divine protection, his trust in a power greater than his own; I noted his repudiation of divine knowledge: "Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, *neither the Son*, but the Father" (Mark xiii., 32); I studied the meaning of his prayer of anguished submission: "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me! nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matt. xxvi., 39); I dwelt on his bitter cry in his dying agony: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. xxvii., 46); I asked the meaning of the final words of rest: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke xxiii., 46). And I saw that, if there were any truth in the Gospels at all, they told the story of a struggling, suffering, sinning, praying man, and not of a God at all, and the dogma of the Deity of Christ followed the rest of the Christian doctrines into the limbo of past beliefs.

Yet one other effort I made to save myself from the difficulties I foresaw in connexion with this final breach with Christianity. There was one man who had in former days wielded over me a great influence, one whose writings had guided and taught me for many years—Dr. Pusey, the venerable leader of the Catholic party in the Church, the learned Patristic scholar, full of the wisdom of antiquity. He believed in Christ as God; what if I put my difficulties to him? If he resolved them for me I should escape the struggle I foresaw; if he could not re-

solve them, then no answer to them was to be hoped for. My decision was quickly made; being with my mother, I could write to him unnoticed, and I sat down and put my questions clearly and fully, stating my difficulties and asking him whether, out of his wider knowledge and deeper reading, he could resolve them for me. I wish I could here print his answer, together with two or three other letters I received from him, but the packet was unfortunately stolen from my desk and I have never recovered it. Dr. Pusey advised me to read Liddon's "Bampton Lectures", referred me to various passages, chiefly from the Fourth Gospel, if I remember rightly, and invited me to go down to Oxford and talk over my difficulties. Liddon's "Bampton Lectures" I had thoroughly studied, and the Fourth Gospel had no weight with me, the arguments in favor of its Alexandrian origin being familiar to me, but I determined to accept his invitation to a personal interview, regarding it as the last chance of remaining in the Church.

To Oxford, accordingly, I took the train, and made my way to the famous Doctor's rooms. I was shown in, and saw a short, stout gentleman, dressed in a cassock, and looking like a comfortable monk; but the keen eyes, steadfastly gazing straight into mine, told me of the power and subtlety hidden by the unprepossessing form. The head was fine and impressive, the voice low, penetrating, drilled into a somewhat monotonous and artificially subdued tone. I quickly found that no sort of enlightenment could possibly result from our interview. He treated me as a penitent going to confession, seeking the advice of a director, not as an enquirer struggling after truth, and resolute to obtain some firm standing-ground in the sea of doubt, whether on the shores of orthodoxy or of heresy. He would not deal with the question of the Deity of Jesus as a question for argument; he reminded me: "You are speaking of your judge," when I pressed some question. The mere suggestion of an imperfection in Jesus' character made him shudder in positive pain, and he checked me with raised hand, and the rebuke: "You are blaspheming; the very thought is a terrible sin". I asked him if he could recommend to me any books which would throw light on the subject: "No, no, you have read too much already. You must pray; you must pray." Then, as I said that I could

not believe without proof, I was told: "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed," and my further questioning was checked by the murmur: "O my child, how undisciplined! how impatient!". Truly, he must have found in me—hot, eager, passionate in my determination to know, resolute not to profess belief while belief was absent—but very little of that meek, chastened, submissive spirit to which he was accustomed in the penitents wont to seek his counsel as their spiritual guide. In vain did he bid me pray as though I believed; in vain did he urge the duty of blind submission to the authority of the Church, of yielding, unreasoning faith, which received but questioned not. He had no conception of the feelings of the sceptical spirit; his own faith was solid as a rock—firm, satisfied, unshakeable; he would as soon have committed suicide as have doubted of the infallibility of the "Universal Church".

"It is not your duty to ascertain the truth," he told me sternly. "It is your duty to accept and to believe the truth as laid down by the Church; at your peril you reject it; the responsibility is not yours so long as you dutifully accept that which the Church has laid down for your acceptance. Did not the Lord promise that the presence of the Spirit should be ever with his Church, to guide her into all truth?"

"But the fact of the promise and its value are the very points on which I am doubtful," I answered.

He shuddered. "Pray, pray," he said. "Father, forgive her, for she knows not what she says."

It was in vain I urged that I had everything to gain and nothing to lose by following his directions, but that it seemed to me that fidelity to truth forbade a pretended acceptance of that which was not believed.

"Everything to lose? Yes, indeed. You will be lost for time and lost for eternity."

"Lost or not," I rejoined, "I must and will try to find out what is true, and I will not believe till I am sure."

"You have no right to make terms with God," he answered, "as to what you will believe and what you will not believe. You are full of intellectual pride."

I sighed hopelessly. Little feeling of pride was there in me just then, and I felt that in this rigid unyielding dogmatism there was no comprehension of my difficulties,

no help for me in my strugglings. I rose and, thanking him for his courtesy, said that I would not waste his time further, that I must go home and just face the difficulties out, openly leaving the Church and taking the consequences. Then for the first time his serenity was ruffled.

"I forbid you to speak of your disbelief," he cried. "I forbid you to lead into your own lost state the souls for whom Christ died."

Slowly and sadly I took my way back to the station, knowing that my last chance of escape had failed me. I recognised in this famous divine the spirit of the priest, which could be tender and pitiful to the sinner, repentant, humble, submissive, craving only for pardon and for guidance, but which was iron to the doubter, to the heretic, and would crush out all questionings of "revealed truth", silencing by force, not by argument, all challenge of the traditions of the Church. Out of such men were made the Inquisitors of the Middle Ages, perfectly conscientious, perfectly rigid, perfectly merciless to the heretic. To them heretics were and are centres of infectious disease, and charity to them "the worst cruelty to the souls of men". Certain that they hold "by no merit of our own, but by the mercy of our God the one truth which he hath revealed", they can permit no questionings, they can accept nought but the most complete submission. But while man aspires after truth, while his brain yearns after knowledge, while his intellect soars upward into the heaven of speculation and "beats the air with tireless wing", so long shall those who demand faith be met by challenge for proof, and those who would blind him shall be defeated by his determination to gaze unblenching on the face of Truth, even though her eyes should turn him into stone.

During this same visit to London I saw Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Scott for the first time. I had gone down to Dulwich to see Mr. and Mrs. Voysey, and after dinner we went over to Upper Norwood, and I was introduced to one of the most remarkable men I have ever met. At that time Mr. Scott was an old man, with beautiful white hair, and eyes like those of a hawk gleaming from under shaggy eyebrows; he had been a man of magnificent physique, and though his frame was then enfeebled, the splendid lion-like head kept its impressive strength and beauty, and told of a unique personality. Of Scotch descent and well-

born, Thomas Scott had, as a boy, been a page at the French Court; his manhood was spent in many lands, for he "was a mighty hunter", though not "before the Lord". He had lived for months among the North American Indians, sharing the hardships of their wild life; he had hunted and fished all over the world. At last, he came home, married, and ultimately settled down at Ramsgate, where he made his home a centre of heretical thought. He issued an enormous number of tracts and pamphlets, and each month he sent out a small packet to hundreds of subscribers and friends. This monthly issue of heretical literature soon made itself a power in the world of thought; the tracts were of various shades of opinion, but were all heretical: some moderate, some extreme; all were well-written, cultured and polished in tone—this was a rule to which Mr. Scott made no exceptions; his writers might say what they liked, but they must have something real to say, and they must say that something in good English. The little white packets found their way into many a quiet country parsonage, into many a fashionable home. His correspondence was world-wide and came from all classes —now a letter from a Prime Minister, now one from a blacksmith. All were equally welcome, and all were answered with equal courtesy. At his house met people of the most varying opinions. Colenso, Bishop of Natal, Edward Maitland, E. Vansittart Neale, Charles Bray, Sara Hennell, W. J. Birch, R. Suffield, and hundreds more, clerics and laymen, scholars and thinkers, all gathered in this one home, to which the right of *entrée* was gained only by love of Truth and desire to spread Freedom among men.

Mr. Scott devoted his fortune to this great work. He would never let publishers have his pamphlets in the ordinary way of trade, but issued them all himself and distributed them gratuitously. If anyone desired to subscribe, well and good, they might help in the work, but make it a matter of business he would not. If anyone sent money for some tracts, he would send out double the worth of the money enclosed, and thus for years he carried on this splendid propagandist work. In all he was nobly seconded by his wife, his "right hand" as he well named her, a sweet, strong, gentle, noble woman, worthy of her husband, and than that no higher praise can be spoken. Of both I shall have more to say hereafter, but at present

we are at the time of my first visit to them at Upper Norwood, whither they had removed from Ramsgate.

Kindly greeting was given by both, and on Mr. Voysey suggesting that judging by one essay of mine that he had seen—an essay which was later expanded into the one on "Inspiration", in the Scott series—my pen would be useful for propagandist work, Mr. Scott bade me try what I could do, and send him for criticism anything I thought good enough for publication; he did not, of course, promise to accept an essay, but he promised to read it. A question arose as to the name to be attached to the essay, in case of publication, and I told him that my name was not my own to use, and that I did not suppose that Mr. Besant could possibly, in his position, give me permission to attach it to a heretical essay; we agreed that any essays I might write should for the present be published anonymously, and that I should try my hand to begin with on the subject of the "Deity of Jesus of Nazareth". And so I parted from those who were to be such good friends to me in the coming time of struggle.

IX.

My resolve was now made, and henceforth there was at least no more doubt so far as my position towards the Church was concerned. I made up my mind to leave it, but was willing to make the leaving as little obtrusive as possible. On my return to Sibsey I stated clearly the ground on which I stood. I was ready to attend the Church services, joining in such parts as were addressed to "the Supreme Being", for I was still heartily Theistic; "the Father", shorn of all the horrible accessories hung round him by Christianity, was still to me an object of adoration, and I could still believe in and worship One who was "righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works", although the Moloch to whom was sacrificed the well-beloved son had passed away for ever from my creed. Christian I was not, though Theist I was, and I felt that the wider and more generous faith would permit me to bow to the common God with my Christian brethren, if only I was not com-

pelled to pay homage to that "Son of Man" whom Christians believed divine, homage which to me had become idolatry, insulting to the "One God", to him of whom Jesus himself had spoken as of "my God and your God".

Simply enough was the difficulty arranged for the moment. It was agreed that I should withdraw myself from the "Holy Communion"—for in that service, full of the recognition of Jesus as Deity, I could not join without hypocrisy. The ordinary services I would attend, merely remaining silent during those portions of them in which I could not honestly take part, and while I knew that these changes in a clergyman's wife could not pass unnoticed in a country village, I yet felt that nothing less than this was consistent with barest duty. While I had merely doubted, I had kept silence, and no act of mine had suggested doubt to others. Now that I had no doubt that Christianity was a delusion, I would no longer act as though I believed that to be of God which heart and intellect rejected as untrue.

For awhile all went smoothly. I daresay the parishioners gossipped about the absence of their vicar's wife from the Sacrament, and indeed I remember the pain and trembling wherewith, on the first "Sacrament Sunday" after my return, I rose from my seat and walked quietly from the church, leaving the white-spread altar. That the vicar's wife should "communicate" was as much a matter of course as that the vicar should "administer"; I had never in my life taken public part in anything that made me noticeable in any way among strangers, and still I can recall the feeling of deadly sickness that well nigh overcame me, as rising to go out I felt that every eye in the church was on me, and that my exit would be the cause of unending comment. As a matter of fact, everyone thought that I was taken suddenly ill, and many were the calls and enquiries on the following day. To any direct question, I answered quietly that I was unable to take part in the profession of faith required from an honest communicant, but the statement was rarely necessary, for the idea of heresy in a vicar's wife did not readily suggest itself to the ordinary bucolic mind, and I did not proffer information when it was unasked for.

It happened that, shortly after that (to me) memorable Christmas of 1872, a sharp epidemic of typhoid fever broke

out in the village of Sibsey. The drainage there was of the most primitive type, and the contagion spread rapidly. Naturally fond of nursing, I found in this epidemic work just fitted to my hand, and I was fortunate enough to be able to lend personal help that made me welcome in the homes of the stricken poor. The mothers who slept exhausted while I watched beside their darlings' bedsides will never, I like to fancy, think over harshly of the heretic whose hand was as tender and often more skilful than their own. I think Mother Nature meant me for a nurse, for I take a sheer delight in nursing anyone, provided only that there is peril in the sickness, so that there is the strange and solemn feeling of the struggle between the human skill one wields and the supreme enemy, Death. There is a strange fascination in fighting Death, step by step, and this is of course felt to the full where one fights for life as life, and not for a life one loves. When the patient is beloved, the struggle is touched with agony, but where one fights with Death over the body of a stranger, there is a weird enchantment in the contest without personal pain, and as one forces back the hated foe there is a curious triumph in the feeling which marks the death-grip yielding up its prey, as one snatches back to earth the life which had well-nigh perished.

Meanwhile, the promise to Mr. Scott was not forgotten, and I penned the essay on "The Deity of Jesus of Nazareth" which stands first in the collection of essays published later under the title, "My Path to Atheism". The only condition annexed to my sending it to Mr. Scott was the perfectly fair one that if published it should appear without my name. Mr. Scott was well pleased with the essay, and before long it was printed as one of the "Scott Series", to my great delight.

But unfortunately a copy sent to a relative of Mr. Besant's brought about a storm. That gentlemen did not disagree with it—indeed he admitted that all educated persons must hold the views put forward—but what would Society say? What would "the county families" think if one of the clerical party was known to be a heretic. This dreadful little paper bore the inscription "By the wife of a beneficed clergyman"; what would happen if the "wife of the beneficed clergyman" were identified with Mrs. Besant of Sibsey?

After some thought I made a compromise. Alter or hide my faith I would not, but yield personal feelings I would. I gave up my correspondence with Mr. and Mrs. Voysey, which might, it was alleged, be noticed in the village and so give rise to mischievous gossip. In this Mr. and Mrs. Voysey most generously helped me, bidding me rest assured of their cordial friendship while counselling me for awhile to cease the correspondence which was one of the few pleasures of my life, but was not part of my duty to the higher and freer faith which we had all embraced. With keen regret I bade them for awhile farewell, and went back to my lonely life.

In that spring of 1873, I delivered my first lecture. It was delivered to no one, queer as that may sound to my readers. And indeed, it was queer altogether. I was learning to play the organ, and was in the habit of practising in the church by myself, without a blower. One day, being securely locked in, I thought I would like to try how "it felt" to speak from the pulpit. Some vague fancies were stirring in me, that I could speak if I had the chance; very vague they were, for the notion that I might ever speak on the platform had never dawned on me; only the longing to find outlet in words was in me; the feeling that I had something to say, and the yearning to say it. So, queer as it may seem, I ascended the pulpit in the big, empty, lonely church, and there and then I delivered my first lecture! I shall never forget the feeling of power and of delight which came upon me as my voice rolled down the aisles, and the passion in me broke into balanced sentences, and never paused for rhythmical expression, while I felt that all I wanted was to see the church full of upturned faces, instead of the emptiness of the silent pews. And as though in a dream the solitude became peopled, and I saw the listening faces and the eager eyes, and as the sentences came unbidden from my lips, and my own tones echoed back to me from the pillars of the ancient church, I knew of a verity that the gift of speech was mine, and that if ever—and it seemed then so impossible—if ever the chance came to me of public work, that at least this power of melodious utterance should win hearing for any message I had to bring.

But that knowledge remained a secret all to my own

self for many a long month, for I quickly felt ashamed of that foolish speechifying in an empty church, and I only recall it now because, in trying to trace out one's mental growth, it is only fair to notice the first silly striving after that expression in spoken words, which, later, has become to me one of the deepest delights of life. And indeed none can know save they who have felt it what joy there is in the full rush of language which moves and sways; to feel a crowd respond to the lightest touch; to see the faces brighten or graven at your bidding; to know that the sources of human passion and human emotion gush at the word of the speaker, as the stream from the riven rock; to feel that the thought that thrills through a thousand hearers has its impulse from you and throbs back to you the fuller from a thousand heart-beats; is there any joy in life more brilliant than this, fuller of passionate triumph, and of the very essence of intellectual delight?

My pen was busy, and a second pamphlet, dealing with the Johannine gospel, was written and sent up to Mr. Scott under the same conditions of anonymity as before, for it was seen that my authorship could in nowise be suspected, and Mr. Scott paid me for my work. I had also made a collection of Theistic, but non-Christian, hymns, with a view of meeting a want felt by Mr. Voysey's congregation at St. George's Hall, and this was lying idle, while it might be utilised. So it was suggested that I should take up again my correspondence with Mr. and Mrs. Voysey, and glad enough was I to do so. During this time my health was rapidly failing, and in the summer of 1873 it broke down completely. At last I went up to London to consult a physician, and was told I was suffering from general nervous exhaustion, which was accompanied by much disturbance of the functions of the heart. "There is no organic disease yet," said Dr. Sibson, "but there soon will be, unless you can completely change your manner of life." Such a change was not possible, and I grew rapidly worse. The same bad adviser who had before raised the difficulty of "what will Society say?" again interfered, and urged that pressure should be put on me to compel me at least to conform to the outward ceremonies of the Church, and to attend the Holy Communion. This I was resolved not to do, whatever might

be the result of my "obstinacy", and the result was not long in coming.

I had been with the children to Southsea, to see if the change would restore my shattered health, and stayed in town with my mother on my return under Dr. Sibson's care. Very skilful and very good to me was Dr. Sibson, giving me for almost nothing all the wealthiest could have bought with their gold, but he could not remove all then in my life which made the re-acquiring of health impossible. What the doctor could not do, however, others did. It was resolved that I should either resume attendance at the Communion, or should not return home; hypocrisy or expulsion—such was the alternative; I chose the latter.

A bitterly sad time followed; my dear mother was heartbroken; to her, with her wide and vague form of Christianity, loosely held, the intensity of my feeling that where I did not believe I would not pretend belief, was incomprehensible. She recognised far more fully than I all that a separation from my home meant for me, and the difficulties which would surround a young woman not yet six-and-twenty, living alone. She knew how brutally the world judges, and how the mere fact that a woman is young and alone justifies any coarseness of slander. Then, I did not guess how cruel men and women could be, but knowing it from eleven years' experience, I deliberately say that I would rather go through it all again with my eyes wide open from the first, than have passed those eleven years "in Society" under the burden of an acted lie.

But the struggle was hard when she prayed me for her sake to give way; against harshness I had been rigid as steel, but to remain steadfast when my darling mother, whom I loved as I loved nothing else on earth, begged me on her knees to yield, was indeed hard. I felt as though it must be a crime to refuse submission when she urged it, but still—to live a lie? Not even for her was that possible.

Then there were the children, the two little ones who worshipped me, I who was to them mother, nurse, and playfellow. Were these also to be resigned? For awhile, at least, this complete loss was spared me, for facts (which I have not touched on in this record) came accidentally to my brother's knowledge, and he resolved that I should have the protection of legal separation, and should not be

turned wholly penniless and alone into the world. So, when everything was arranged, I found myself possessed of my little girl, of complete personal freedom, and of a small monthly income sufficient for respectable starvation.

X.

The "world was all before us where to choose", but circumstances narrowed the choice down to Hobson's. I had no ready money beyond the first month's payment of my annuity; furnished lodgings were beyond my means, and I had nothing wherewith to buy furniture. My brother offered me a home, on condition that I should give up my "heretical friends" and keep quiet; but, being freed from one bondage, nothing was further from my thoughts than to enter another. Besides, I did not choose to be a burden on anyone, and I resolved to "get something to do", to rent a tiny house, and to make a nest where my mother, my little girl, and I could live happily together. The difficulty was the "something"; I spent various shillings in agencies, with a quite wonderful unanimity of failures. I tried to get some fancy needlework, advertised as an infallible source of income to "ladies in reduced circumstances"; I fitted the advertisement admirably, for I was a lady, and my circumstances were decidedly reduced, but I only earned 4s. 6d. by weeks of stitching, and the materials cost nearly as much as the finished work. I experimented with a Birmingham firm, who generously offered everyone an opportunity of adding to their incomes, and received in answer to the small fee demanded a pencil-case, with an explanation that I was to sell little articles of that description—going as far as cruet-stands—to my friends; I did not feel equal to springing pencil-cases and cruet-stands casually on my acquaintances, so did not start in that business. It would be idle to relate all the things I tried, and failed in, until I began to think that the "something to do" was not so easy to find as I had expected.

I made up my mind to settle at Upper Norwood, near Mr. and Mrs. Scott, who were more than good to me in my trouble; and I fixed on a very little house in Colby Road,

Gipsy Hill, to be taken from the ensuing Easter. Then came the question of furniture; a friend of Mr. Scott's gave me an introduction to a manufacturer, who agreed to let me have furniture for a bedroom and sitting-room, and to let me pay him by monthly instalments. The next thing was to save a few months' annuity, and so have a little money in hand, wherewith to buy necessaries on starting, and to this end I decided to accept a loving invitation to Folkestone, where my grandmother was living with two of my aunts, and there to seek some employment, no matter what, provided it gave me food and lodging, and enabled me to put aside my few pounds a month.

Relieved from the constant strain of fear and anxiety, my health was quickly improving, and the improvement became more rapid after I went down with my mother to Folkestone. The hearty welcome offered to me there was extended with equal warmth to little Mabel, who soon arrived, a most forlorn little maiden. She was only three years old, and she had not seen me for some weeks; her passion of delight was pitiful; she clung to me, in literal fashion, for weeks afterwards, and screamed if she lost sight of me for a moment; it was long before she got over the separation and the terror of her lonely journey from Sibsey and London in charge only of the guard. But she was a "winsome wee thing", and danced into everyone's heart; after "mamma", "granny" was the prime favorite, and my dear mother worshipped her first grand-daughter; never was prettier picture than the red-golden hair nestled against the white, the baby-grace contrasting with the worn stateliness of her tender nurse. From that time forward—with the exception of a few weeks of which I shall speak presently and of the yearly stay of a month with her father—little Mabel was my constant companion, until Sir George Jessel's brutality robbed me of my child. She would play contentedly while I was working, a word now and again enough to make her happy; when I had to go out without her she would run to the door with me, and the "good-bye" came from down-curved lips, and she was ever watching at the window for my return, and the sunny face was always the first to welcome me home. Many and many a time have I been coming home, weary and heart-sick, and the glimpse of the little face watching has reminded me that I must not carry in a grave face to sadden

my darling, and the effort to throw off the dreariness for her sake shook it off altogether, and brought back the sunshine. I have never forgiven Sir George Jessel, and I never shall, though his death has left me only his memory to hate.

At Folkestone, I continued my search for "something to do", and for some weeks sought for pupils, thinking I might thus turn my heresy to account. But pupils are not readily attainable by a heretic woman, away from her natural home, and with a young child as "encumbrance". It chanced, however, that the vicar of Folkestone, Mr. Woodward, was then without a governess, and his wife was in very delicate health. My people knew him well, and as I had plenty of spare time, I offered to teach the children for a few hours a day. The offer was gladly accepted, and I soon arranged to go and stay at the house for awhile, until he could find a regular governess. I thought that at least I could save my small income while I was there, and Mabel and I were to be boarded and lodged in exchange for my work. This work was fairly heavy, but I did not mind that; it soon became heavier. Some serious fault on the part of one or both servants led to their sudden retirement, and I became head cook as well as governess and nurse. On the whole, I think I shall not try to live by cooking, if other trades fail; I don't mind boiling and frying, and making pie-crust is rather pleasant, but I do object to lifting saucepans and blistering my hands over heavy kettles. There is a certain charm in making a stew, especially to the unaccustomed cook, because of the excitement of wondering what the result of such various ingredients will be, and whether any flavor save that of onions will survive the competition in the mixture. On the whole my services as cook were voted very successful; I did my cooking better than I did my sweeping: the latter was a failure from sheer want of muscular strength.

This curious episode came to an end abruptly. One of my little pupils fell ill with diptheria, and I was transformed from cook into sick-nurse. I sent my Mabel off promptly to her dear grandmother's care, and gave myself up to my old delight in nursing. But it is a horrible disease, diptheria, and the suffering of the patient is frightful to witness. I shall never forget the poor little girl's black parched lips and gasping breath.

Scarcely was she convalescent, when the youngest boy, a fine, strong, healthy little fellow, sickened with scarlet fever. We elders held a consultation, and decided to isolate the top floor from the rest of the house, and to nurse the little lad there; it seemed almost hopeless to prevent such a disease from spreading through a family of children, but our vigorous measures were successful, and none other suffered. I was voted to the post of nurse, and installed myself promptly, taking up the carpets, turning out the curtains, and across the doorways hanging sheets which I kept always wet with chloride of lime. My meals were brought upstairs and put on the landing outside; my patient and I remained completely isolated, until the disease had run its course; and when all risk was over, I proudly handed over my charge, the disease touching no other member of the flock.

It was a strange time, those weeks of the autumn and early winter in Mr. Woodward's house. He was a remarkably good man, very religious and to a very remarkable extent not "of this world". A "priest" to the tips of his finger-nails, and looking on his priestly office as the highest a man could fill, he yet held it always as one which put him at the service of the poorest who needed help. He was very good to me, and, while deeply lamenting my "perversion", held, by some strange unpriestlike charity, that my "unbelief" was but a passing cloud, sent as trial by "the Lord", and soon to vanish again, leaving me in the "sunshine of faith". He marvelled much, I learned afterwards, where I gained my readiness to work heartily for others, and to remain serenely content amid the roughnesses of my toiling life. To my great amusement I heard later that his elder daughters, trained in strictest observance of all Church ceremonies, had much discussed my non-attendance at the Sacrament, and had finally arrived at the conclusion that I had committed some deadly sin, for which the humble work which I undertook at their house was the appointed penance, and that I was excluded from "the Blessed Sacrament" until the penance was completed!

Very shortly after the illness above-mentioned, my mother went up to town, whither I was soon to follow her, for now the spring had arrived, and it was time to prepare our new home. How eagerly we had looked forward to

taking possession; how we had talked over our life together and knitted on the new one we anticipated to the old one we remembered; how we had planned out Mabel's training and arranged the duties that should fall to the share of each! Day-dreams, that never were to be realised!

But a brief space had passed since my mother's arrival in town, when I received a telegram from my brother, stating that she was dangerously ill, and summoning me at once to her bedside. As swiftly as express train could carry me to London I was there, and found my darling in bed, prostrate, the doctor only giving her three days to live. One moment's sight I caught of her face, drawn and haggard; then as she saw me it all changed into delight; "At last! now I can rest."

The brave spirit had at length broken down, never again to rise; the action of her heart had failed, the valves no longer performed their duty, and the bluish shade of forehead and neck told that the blood was no longer sent pure and vivifying through the arteries. But her death was not as near as the doctor had feared; "I do not think she can live four-and-twenty hours," he said to me, after I had been with her for two days. I told her his verdict, but it moved her little; "I do not feel that I am going to die just yet," she said resolutely, and she was right. There was an attack of fearful prostration, a very wrestling with death, and then the grim shadow drew backwards, and she struggled back to life. Soon, as is usual in cases of such disease, dropsy intervened, with all its weariness of discomfort, and for week after week her long martyrdom dragged on. I nursed her night and day, with a very desperation of tenderness, for now fate had touched the thing that was dearest to me in life. A second horrible crisis came, and for the second time her tenacity and my love beat back the death-stroke. She did not wish to die—the love of life was strong in her; I would not let her die; between us we kept the foe at bay.

At this period, after eighteen months of abstention, and for the last time, I took the Sacrament. This statement will seem strange to my readers, but the matter happened in this wise:

My dear mother had an intense longing to take it, but absolutely refused to do so unless I partook of it with her.

"If it be necessary to salvation," she persisted doggedly, "I will not take it if darling Annie is to be shut out. I would rather be lost with her than saved without her." In vain I urged that I could not take it without telling the officiating clergyman of my heresy, and that under such circumstances the clergyman would be sure to refuse to administer to me. She insisted that she could not die happy if she did not take it with me. I went to a clergyman I knew well, and laid the case before him; as I expected, he refused to allow me to communicate. I tried a second; the result was the same. I was in despair; to me the service was foolish and superstitious, but I would have done a great deal more for my mother than eat bread and drink wine, provided that the eating and drinking did not, by pretence of faith on my part, soil my honesty. At last a thought struck me; there was Dean Stanley, my mother's favorite, a man known to be of the broadest school within the Church of England; suppose I asked him? I did not know him, though as a young child I had known his sister as my mother's friend, and I felt the request would be something of an impertinence. Yet there was just the chance that he might consent, and then my darling's deathbed would be the easier. I told no one, but set out resolutely for the Deanery, Westminister, timidly asked for the Dean, and followed the servant upstairs with a very sinking heart. I was left for a moment alone in the library, and then the Dean came in. I don't think I ever in my life felt more intensely uncomfortable than I did in that minute's interval, as he stood waiting for me to speak, his clear, grave, piercing eyes gazing right into mine.

Very falteringly I preferred my request, stating baldly that I was not a believer in Christ, that my mother was dying, that she was fretting to take the Sacrament, that she would not take it unless I took it with her, that two clergymen had refused to allow me to take part in the service, that I had come to him in despair, feeling how great was the intrusion, but—she was dying.

"You were quite right to come to me," he said as I concluded, in that soft musical voice of his, his keen gaze having changed into one no less direct, but marvellously gentle: "of course, I will go and see your mother, and I have little doubt that if you will not mind talking over

your position with me, we may see our way clear to doing as your mother wishes."

I could barely speak my thanks, so much did the kindly sympathy move me; the revulsion from the anxiety and fear of rebuff was strong enough to be almost pain. But Dean Stanley did more than I asked. He suggested that he should call that afternoon, and have a quiet chat with my mother, and then come again on the following day to administer the Sacrament.

"A stranger's presence is always trying to a sick person," he said, with rare delicacy of thought; "and joined to the excitement of the service it might be too much for your dear mother. If I spend half-an-hour with her to-day, and administer the Sacrament to-morrow, it will, I think, be better for her."

So Dean Stanley came that afternoon, and remained talking with my mother for about half-an-hour, and then set himself to understand my own position. He finally told me that conduct was far more important than theory, and that he regarded all as "Christians" who recognised and tried to follow the moral law. On the question of the absolute Deity of Jesus he laid but little stress; Jesus was, "in a special sense", the "Son of God", but it was folly to jangle about words with only human meanings when dealing with the mysteries of divine existence, and above all it was folly to make such words into dividing lines between earnest souls. The one important matter was the recognition of "duty to God and man", and all who were one in that recognition might rightfully join in an act of worship, the essence of which was not acceptance of dogma, but love of God and self-sacrifice for man. "The Holy Communion", he said, in his soft tones, "was never meant to divide from each other hearts that are searching after the one true God; it was meant by its founder as a symbol of unity, not of strife".

On the following day he came again, and celebrated the "Holy Communion" by the bedside of my dear mother. Well was I repaid for the struggle it had cost me to ask so great a kindness from a stranger, when I saw the comfort that gentle noble heart had given to my mother. He soothed away all her anxiety about my heresy with tactful wisdom, bidding her have no fear of differences of opinion where the heart was set on truth. "Remember", she told

me he had said to her, "remember that our God is the God of truth, and that therefore the honest search for truth can never be displeasing in his eyes".

Once again after that he came, and after his visit to my mother we had another long talk. I ventured to ask him, the conversation having turned that way, how, with views so broad as his own, he found it possible to remain in communion with the Church of England. "I think", he said gently, "that I am of more service to true religion by remaining in the Church and striving to widen its boundaries from within, than if I left it and worked from without". And he went on to explain how, as Dean of Westminster, he was in a rarely independent position, and could make the Abbey of a wider national service than would otherwise be possible. In all he said on this his love for and his pride in the glorious Abbey were manifest, and it was easy to see that old historical associations, love of music, of painting, and of stately architecture, were the bonds that held him bound to the "old historic Church of England". His emotions, not his intellect, kept him Churchman, and he shrunk with the over-sensitiveness of the cultured scholar from the idea of allowing the old traditions to be handled roughly by inartistic hands. Naturally of a refined and delicate nature, he had been rendered yet more sensitive by the training of the college and the court; the exquisite courtesy of his manners was but the high polish of a naturally gentle and artistic spirit, a spirit whose gentleness sometimes veiled its strength. I have often heard Dean Stanley harshly spoken of, I have heard his honesty roughly challenged, but never in my presence has he been attacked that I have not uttered my protest against the injustice done him, and thus striven to repay some small fraction of that great debt of gratitude which I shall owe to his memory as long as I live.

As the spring grew warmer, my mother rallied wonderfully, and we began to dare to hope. At last it was decided to move her down to Norwood; she was wearying for change, and it was thought that the purer air of the country might aid the system to recover tone and strength. The furniture was waiting for me to send for it, and it was soon conveyed to Colby Road; it only furnished two rooms, but I could easily sleep on the floor, and I made the two rooms on the ground floor into bedroom and sittingroom for my

dear invalid. One little servant-maid was all our slender resources could afford, and a very charming one was found for me by Mrs. Scott. Through the months of hard work and poor living that followed, Mary was the most thoughtful and most generous of comrades. And, indeed, I have been very fortunate in my servants, always finding in them willingness to help, and freely-rendered, ungrudging kindness.

I have just said that I could only furnish two rooms, but on my next visit to complete all the arrangements for my mother's reception, I found the bedroom that was to be mine neatly and prettily furnished. The good fairy was Mrs. Scott, who, learning the "nakedness of the land" from Mary, had determined that I should not be as uncomfortable as I had expected.

It was the beginning of May, and the air was soft and bright and warm. We hired an invalid carriage and drove slowly down to Norwood. My mother seemed to enjoy the drive, and when we lifted her into the bright cosy room prepared for her, she was delighted with the change. On the following morning the improvement was continued, but in the evening she was taken suddenly worse, and we lifted her into bed and telegraphed for the doctor. But now the end had come; her strength completely failed, and she felt that death was upon her; but selfless to the last, her only fear was for me. "I am leaving you alone," she would sigh from time to time, and truly I felt, with an anguish I dared not realise, that when she died I should indeed be alone on earth.

For two days longer she was with me, and, miser with my last few hours, I never left her side for five minutes. At last on the 10th of May the weakness passed into delirium, but even then the faithful eyes followed me about the room, until at length they closed for ever, and and as the sun sank low in the heavens, the breath came slower and slower, till the silence of death came down upon us and she was gone.

All that followed was like a dream. I would have none touch my dead save myself and her favorite sister, who was with us at the last; she wept over her, but I could not, not even when they hid her beneath the coffin-lid, nor all that weary way to Kensal Green, whither we took her to lay her with her husband and her baby-son. I could not be-

lieve that our day-dream was dead and buried, and the home destroyed ere it was fairly made. My "house was left unto" me "desolate", and the rooms filled with sunshine, but unlighted by her presence, seemed to reiterate to me: "You are all alone".

XI.

THE two months after my mother's death were the dreariest my life has known, and they were months of tolerably hard struggle. The little house in Colby Road taxed my slender resources heavily, and the search for work was not yet successful. I do not know how I should have managed but for the help, ever at hand, of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Scott. During this time I wrote for Mr. Scott pamphlets on Inspiration, Atonement, Mediation and Salvation, Eternal Torture, Religious Education of Children, Natural *v.* Revealed Religion, and the few guineas thus earned were very valuable. Their house, too, was always open to me, and this was no small help, for often in those days the little money I had was enough to buy food for two but not enough to buy it for three, and I would go out and study all day at the British Museum, so as to "have my dinner in town", the said dinner being conspicuous by its absence. If I was away for two evenings running from the hospitable house in the terrace, Mrs. Scott would come down to see what had happened, and many a time the supper there was of real physical value to me. Well might I write, in 1879, when Thomas Scott lay dead: "It was Thomas Scott whose house was open to me when my need was sorest, and he never knew, this generous noble heart, how sometimes, when I went in, weary and overdone, from a long day's study in the British Museum, with scarce food to struggle through the day—he never knew how his genial 'Well, little lady', in welcoming tone, cheered the then utter loneliness of my life. To no living man or woman—save one—do I owe the debt of gratitude that I owe to Thomas Scott."

The small amount of jewellery I possessed, and all my superfluous clothes, were turned into more necessary arti-

cles, and the child, at least, never suffered a solitary touch of want. Mary was a wonderful contriver, and kept house on the very slenderest funds that could be put into a servant's hands, and she also made the little place so bright and fresh-looking that it was always a pleasure to go into it. Recalling those days of "hard living", I can now look on them without regret. More, I am glad to have passed through them, for they have taught me how to sympathise with those who are struggling as I struggled then, and I never can hear the words fall from pale lips: "I am hungry", without remembering how painful a thing hunger is, and without curing that pain, at least for the moment.

But I turn from this to the brighter side of my life, the intellectual and social side, where I found a delight unknown in the old days of bondage. First, there was the joy of freedom, the joy of speaking out frankly and honestly each thought. Truly, I had the right to say: "With a great price obtained I this freedom," and having paid the price, I revelled in the liberty I had bought. Mr. Scott's valuable library was at my service; his keen brain challenged my opinions, probed my assertions, and suggested phases of thought hitherto untouched. I studied harder than ever, and the study now was unchecked by any fear of possible consequences. I had nothing left of the old faith save belief in "a God", and that began slowly to melt away. The Theistic axiom: "If there be a God at all he must be at least as good as his highest creature", began with an "if", and to that "if" I turned my attention. "Of all impossible things", writes Miss Frances Power Cobbe, "the most impossible must surely be that a man should dream something of the good and the noble, and that it should prove at last that his Creator was less good and less noble than he had dreamed." But, I questioned, are we sure that there is a Creator? Granted that, if there is, he must be above his highest creature, but—is there such a being? "The ground", says the Rev. Charles Voysey, "on which our belief in God rests is man. Man, parent of Bibles and Churches, inspirer of all good thoughts and good deeds. Man, the master-piece of God's thought on earth. Man, the text-book of all spiritual knowledge. Neither miraculous nor infallible, man is nevertheless the only trustworthy record of the Divine mind in things per-

taining to God. Man's reason, conscience, and affections are the only true revelation of his Maker." But what if God were only man's own image reflected in the mirror of man's mind? What if man were the creator, not the revelation of his God?

It was inevitable that such thoughts should arise after the more palpably indefensible doctrines of Christianity had been discarded. Once encourage the human mind to think, and bounds to the thinking can never again be set by authority. Once challenge traditional beliefs, and the challenge will ring on every shield which is hanging in the intellectual arena. Around me was the atmosphere of conflict, and, freed from its long repression, my mind leapt up to share in the strife with a joy in the intellectual tumult, the intellectual strain.

At this time I found my way to South Place Chapel, to which Mr. Moncure D. Conway was attracting many a seeker after truth. I was fortunate enough to be introduced to this remarkable religious leader, and to his charming wife, one of the sweetest and steadiest natures which it has been my lot to meet. It was from Mrs. Conway that I first heard of Mr. Bradlaugh as a speaker that everyone should hear. She asked me one day if I had been to the Hall of Science, and I said, with the stupid, ignorant reflexion of other people's prejudices which is but too common:

"No, I have never been. Mr. Bradlaugh is rather a rough sort of speaker, is he not?

"He is the finest speaker of Saxon English that I have ever heard," Mrs. Conway answered, "except, perhaps, John Bright, and his power over a crowd is something marvellous. Whether you agree with him or not, you should hear him."

I replied that I really did not know what his views were, beyond having a vague notion that he was an Atheist of a rather pronounced type, but that I would go and hear him when I had an opportunity.

Mr. Conway had passed beyond the emotional Theism of Mr. Voysey, and talk with him did something towards widening my views on the question of a Divine Existence. I re-read carefully Mansel's Bampton Lectures, and found in them much to provoke doubt, nothing to induce faith. Take the following phrases, and think whither they carry

us. Dean Mansel is speaking of God as Infinite, and he says: "That a man can be conscious of the Infinite is, then, a supposition which, in the very terms in which it is expressed, annihilates itself. . . . . The Infinite, if it is to be conceived at all, must be conceived as potentially everything and actually nothing; for if there is anything in general which it cannot become, it is thereby limited; and if there is anything in particular which it actually is, it is thereby excluded from being any other thing. But again, it must also be conceived as actually everything and potentially nothing: for an unrealised potentiality is likewise a limitation. If the infinite can be that which it is not, it is by that very possibility marked out as incomplete and capable of a higher perfection. If it is actually everything, it possesses no characteristic feature by which it can be distinguished from anything else and discerned as an object of consciousness."

Could any argument more thoroughly Atheistic be put before a mind which dared to think out to the logical end any train of thought? Such reasoning can lead but to one of two ends: despair of truth and consequent acceptance of the incomprehensible as Divine, or else the resolute refusal to profess belief where reason is helpless, and where faith is but the credulity of ignorance. In my case, it had the latter effect.

At the same time I re-read Mill's "Examination of Sir W. Hamilton's Philosophy", and also went through a pretty severe study of Comte's *Philosophie Positive*. I had entirely given up the use of prayer, not because I was an Atheist but because I was still a Theist. It seemed to me to be absurd to pray, if I believed in a God who was wiser and better than myself. An all-wise God did not need my suggestions: an all-good God would do all that was best without my prompting. Prayer appeared to me to be a blasphemous impertinence, and for a considerable time I had discontinued its use. But God fades gradually out of the daily life of those who never pray; a God who is not a Providence is a superfluity; when from the heaven does not smile a listening Father, it soon becomes an empty space whence resounds no echo of man's cry.

At last I said to Mr. Scott: "Mr. Scott, may I write a tract on the nature and existence of God?"

He glanced at me keenly: "Ah, little lady; you are

facing then that problem at last? I thought it must come. Write away."

The thought that had been driving me forward found its expression in the opening words of the essay (published a few months later, with one or two additions that were made after I had read two of Mr. Bradlaugh's essays, his "Plea for Atheism", and "Is there a God?"): "It is impossible for those who study the deeper religious problems of our time to stave off much longer the question which lies at the root of them all, 'What do you believe in regard to God?' We may controvert Christian doctrines one after another; point by point we may be driven from the various beliefs of our churches; reason may force us to see contradictions where we had imagined harmony, and may open our eyes to flaws where we had dreamed of perfection; we resign all idea of a revelation; we seek for God in Nature only: we renounce for ever the hope (which glorified our former creed into such alluring beauty) that at some future time we should verily 'see' God; that 'our eyes should behold the King in his beauty', in that fairy 'land which is very far off'. But every step we take onwards towards a more reasonable faith and a surer light of Truth, leads us nearer and nearer to the problem of problems: 'What is THAT which men call God?".

I sketched out the plan of my essay and had written most of it when on returning one day from the British Museum I stopped at the shop of Mr. Edward Truelove, 256 High Holborn. I had been working at some Comtist literature, and had found a reference to Mr. Truelove's shop as one at which Comtist publications might be bought. Lying on the counter was a copy of the *National Reformer*, and attracted by the title I bought it. I had never before heard of nor seen the paper, and I read it placidly in the omnibus; looking up, I was at first puzzled and then amused to see an old gentleman gazing at me with indignation and horror printed on his countenance; I realised that my paper had disturbed his peace of mind, and that the sight of a young woman, respectably dressed in crape, reading an Atheistic journal in an omnibus was a shock too great to be endured by the ordinary Philistine without sign of discomposure. He looked so hard at the paper that I was inclined to offer it to him for his perusal, but repressed the mischievous inclination, and read on demurely.

This first copy of the paper with which I was to be so closely connected bore date July 19th, 1874, and contained two long letters from a Mr. Arnold of Northampton, attacking Mr. Bradlaugh, and a brief and singularly self-restrained answer from the latter. There was also an article on the National Secular Society, which made me aware that there was an organisation devoted to the propagandism of Free Thought. I felt that if such a society existed, I ought to belong to it, and I consequently wrote a short note to the editor of the *National Reformer*, asking whether it was necessary for a person to profess Atheism before being admitted to the Society. The answer appeared in the *National Reformer*:—

"S. E.—To be a member of the National Secular Society it is only necessary to be able honestly to accept the four principles, as given in the *National Reformer* of June 14th. This any person may do without being required to avow himself an Atheist. Candidly, we can see no logical resting-place between the entire acceptance of authority, as in the Roman Catholic Church, and the most extreme Rationalism. If, on again looking to the Principles of the Society, you can accept them, we repeat to you our invitation."

I sent my name in as an active member, and find it recorded in the *National Reformer* of August 9th. Having received an intimation that Londoners could receive their certificates at the Hall of Science from Mr. Bradlaugh on any Sunday evening, I betook myself thither, and it was on the 2nd August, 1874, that I first set foot in a Free-thought hall.

As I sat, much crushed, surveying the crowded audience with much interest and longing to know which were members of the brotherhood I had entered, a sudden roar of cheering startled me. I saw a tall figure passing swiftly along and mounting the stairs, and the roar deepened and swelled as he made a slight acknowledgment of the greeting and sat down. I remember well my sensations as I looked at Charles Bradlaugh for the first time. The grave, quiet, *strong* look, as he sat facing the crowd, impressed me strangely, and most of all was I surprised at the breadth of forehead, the massive head, of the man I had heard described as a mere ignorant demagogue.

The lecture was on "The ancestry and birth of Jesus", and was largely devoted to tracing the resemblance be-

tween the Christ and Krishna myths. As this ground was well-known to me, I was able to judge of the lecturer's accuracy, and quickly found that his knowledge was as sound as his language was splendid. I had never before heard eloquence, sarcasm, fire, and passion brought to bear on the Christian superstition, nor had I ever before felt the sway of the orator, nor the power that dwells in spoken words.

After the lecture, Mr. Bradlaugh came down the Hall with some certificates of membership of the National Secular Society in his hand, and glancing round for their claimants caught, I suppose, some look of expectancy in my face, for he paused and handed me mine, with a questioning, "Mrs. Besant?". Then he said that if I had any doubt at all on the subject of Atheism, he would willingly discuss it with me, if I would write making an appointment for that purpose. I made up my mind to take advantage of the opportunity, and a day or two later saw me walking down Commercial Road, looking for Turner Street.

My first conversation with Mr. Bradlaugh was brief, direct, and satisfactory. We found that there was little real difference between our theological views, and my dislike of the name "Atheist" arose from my sharing in the vulgar error that the Atheist asserted, "There is no God". This error I corrected in the draft of my essay, by inserting a few passages from pamphlets written by acknowledged Atheists, to which Mr. Bradlaugh drew my attention; with this exception the essay remained as it was sketched, being described by Mr. Bradlaugh as "a very good Atheistic essay", a criticism which ended with the smiling comment: "You have thought yourself into Atheism without knowing it."

Very wise were some of the suggestions made: "You should never say you have an opinion on a subject until you have tried to study the strongest things said against the view to which you are inclined". "You must not think you know a subject until you are acquainted with all that the best minds have said about it." "No steady work can be done in public unless the worker study at home far more than he talks outside." And let me say here that among the many things for which I have to thank Mr. Bradlaugh, there is none for which I owe him more grati-

tude than for the fashion in which he has constantly urged the duty of all who stand forward as teachers to study deeply every subject they touch, and the impetus he has given to my own love of knowledge by the constant spur of criticism and of challenge, criticism of every weak statement, challenge of every hastily-expressed view. It will be a good thing for the world when a friendship between a man and a woman no longer means protective condescension on one side and helpless dependence on the other, but when they meet on equal ground of intellectual sympathy, discussing, criticising, studying, and so aiding the evolution of stronger and clearer thought-ability in each.

A few days after our first discussion, Mr. Bradlaugh offered me a place on the staff of the *National Reformer* at a small weekly salary; and my first contribution appeared in the number for August 30th, over the signature of "Ajax". I was obliged to use a *nom de guerre* at first, for the work I was doing for Mr. Scott would have been injured had my name appeared in the columns of the terrible *National Reformer*, and until the work commenced and paid for was concluded I did not feel at liberty to use my own name. Later, I signed my *National Reformer* articles, and the tracts written for Mr. Scott appeared anonymously.

The name was suggested by the famous statue of "Ajax crying for light", a cast of which stands in the centre walk of the Crystal Palace. The cry through the darkness for light, even if light brought destruction, was one that awoke the keenest sympathy of response from my heart:

> "If our fate be death,
> Give light, and let us die!"

To see, to know, to understand, even though the seeing blind, though the knowledge sadden, though the understanding shatter the dearest hopes, such has ever been the craving of the upward-striving mind of man. Some regard it as a weakness, as a folly, but I am sure that it exists most strongly in some of the noblest of our race; that from the lips of those who have done most in lifting the burden of ignorance from the overstrained and bowed shoulders of a stumbling world has gone out most often into the empty darkness the pleading, impassioned cry:—

"Give light."

XII.

My first lecture was delivered at the Co-operative Society's Hall, 55, Castle Street, on August 25th, 1874. Twice before this, I had ventured to raise my voice in discussion, once at a garden-party at which I was invited to join in a brief informal debate, and discovered that words came readily and smoothly, and the second time at the Liberal Social Union, in a discussion on a paper read by a member —I forget by whom—dealing with the opening of Museums and Art Galleries on Sunday.

My membership of that same "Liberal" Social Union was not, by the way, of very long duration. A discussion arose, one night, on the admissibility of Atheists to the society. Dr. Zerffi declared that he would not remain a member if avowed Atheists were admitted. I declared that I was an Atheist, and that the basis of the Union was liberty. The result was that I found myself coldshouldered, and those who had been warmly cordial to me as a Theist looked askance at me after I had avowed that my scepticism had advanced beyond their "limits of religious thought". The Liberal Social Union knew me no more, but in the wider field of work open before me the narrowmindedness of this petty clique troubled me not at all.

To return from this digression to my first essay in lecturing work. An invitation to read a paper before the Co-operative Society came to me from Mr. Greenwood, who was, I believe, the Secretary, and as the subject was left to my own choice, I determined that my first public attempt at speech should be on behalf of my own sex, and selected for it, "The Political Status of Women". With much fear and trembling was that paper written, and it was a very nervous person who presented herself at the Co-operative Hall. When a visit to the dentist is made, and one stands on the steps outside, desiring to run away ere the neat little boy in buttons opens the door and beams on one with a smile of compassionate contempt and implike triumph, then the world seems dark and life is as a huge blunder. But all such feelings are poor and weak when compared with the sinking of the heart, and the trembling

of the knees, which seize upon the unhappy lecturer as he advances towards his first audience, and as before his eyes rises a ghastly vision of a tongue-tied would-be speaker facing rows of listening faces, listening to—silence.

All this miserable feeling, however, disappeared the moment I rose to my feet and looked at the faces before me. No tremor of nervousness touched me from the first word to the last. And a similar experience has been mine ever since. I am still always nervous before a lecture, and feel miserable and ill-assured, but, once on my feet, I am at my ease, and not once on the platform after the lecture has commenced have I experienced the painful feeling of hesitancy and "fear of the sound of my own voice" of which I have often heard people speak.

The death of Mr. Charles Gilpin in September left vacant one of the seats for Northampton, and Mr. Bradlaugh at once announced his intention of again presenting himself to the constituency as a candidate. He had at first stood for the borough in 1868, and had received 1086 votes; on February 5th, 1874, he received 1653 votes, and of these 1060 were plumpers; the other candidates were Messrs. Merewether, Phipps, Gilpin, and Lord Henley; Mr. Merewether had 12 plumpers; Mr. Phipps, 113; Mr. Gilpin, 64; Lord Henley, 21. Thus signs were already seen of the compact and personally loyal following which was to win the seat for its chief in 1880, after twelve years of steady struggle. In 1868, Mr. John Stuart Mill had strongly supported Mr. Bradlaugh's candidature, and had sent a donation to his election fund. Mr. Mill wrote in his Autobiography (pp. 311, 312):

"He had the support of the working classes; having heard him speak I knew him to be a man of ability, and he had proved that he was the reverse of a demagogue by placing himself in strong opposition to the prevailing opinion of the Democratic party on two such important subjects as Malthusianism and Personal Representation. Men of this sort, who, while sharing the democratic feelings of the working classes, judge political questions for themselves, and have courage to assert their individual convictions against popular opposition, were needed, as it seemed to me, in Parliament; and I did not think that Mr. Bradlaugh's anti-religious opinions (even though he had been intemperate in the expression of them) ought to exclude him."

When the election was over, and after Mr. Mill had

himself been beaten at Westminster, he wrote, referring to his donation: "It was the right thing to do, and if the election were yet to take place, I would do it again". The election in February, 1874, took place while Mr. Bradlaugh was away in America, and this second one in the same year took place on the eve of his departure on another American lecturing tour.

I went down to Northampton to report electioneering incidents for the *National Reformer*, and spent some days there in the whirl of the struggle. The Whig party was more bitter against Mr. Bradlaugh than was the Tory, and every weapon that could be forged out of slander and falsehood was used against him by "Liberals", who employed their Christianity as an electioneering dodge to injure a man whose sturdy Radicalism they feared. Over and over again Mr. Bradlaugh was told that he was an "impossible candidate", and gibe and sneer and scoff were flung at the man who had neither ancestors nor wealth to recommend him, who fought his battle with his brain and his tongue, and whose election expenses were paid by hundreds of contributions from poor men and women in every part of the land. Strenuous efforts were made to procure a "Liberal" candidate, who should be able at least to prevent Mr. Bradlaugh's return by obtaining the votes of the Liberal as against the Radical party. Messrs. Bell and James and Dr. Pearce came on the scene only to disappear. Mr. Jacob Bright and Mr. Arthur Arnold were suggested. Mr. Ayrton's name was whispered. Major Lumley was recommended by Mr. Bernal Osborne. Dr. Kenealy proclaimed himself ready to rescue the Liberal party in their dire strait. Mr. Tillet of Norwich, Mr. Cox of Belper, were invited, but neither of these would consent to opppose a sound Radical, who had fought two elections at Northampton and who had been before the constituency for six years. At last Mr. William Fowler, a banker, was invited, and accepted the task of handing over the representation of a Radical borough to a Tory.

October 6th was fixed as the election day, and at 7.30 on that day Mr. Merewether, the Tory, was declared elected with 2,171 votes. Mr. Bradlaugh polled 1,766, having added another 133 voters to those who had polled for him in the previous February.

The violent abuse levelled against Mr. Bradlaugh by the

Whigs, and the foul and wicked slanders circulated against him, had angered almost to madness those who knew and loved him, and when it was found that the unscrupulous Whig devices had succeeded in turning the election against him, the fury broke out into open violence. As Mr. Bradlaugh was sitting well-nigh exhausted in the hotel, the landlord rushed in, crying to him to go out and try to stop the people, or there would be murder done at the "Palmerston", Mr. Fowler's head-quarters; the crowd was charging the door, and the windows were being broken with showers of stones. Weary as he was, Mr. Bradlaugh sprang to his feet and swiftly made his way to the rescue of those who had defeated him. Flinging himself before the door, he drove the crowd back, scolded them into quietness and dispersed them. But at nine o'clock he had to leave the town to catch the mail for Queenstown, where he was to join the steamer for America, and after he had left, the riot he had quelled broke out afresh. The soldiers were called out, the Riot Act was read, stones flew freely, heads and windows were broken, but no very serious harm was done. The "Palmerston" and the printing office of the *Mercury*, the Whig organ, were the principal sufferers, windows and doors vanishing somewhat completely.

In this same month of October I find I noted in the *National Reformer* that it was rumored "that on hearing that the Prince of Wales had succeeded the Earl of Ripon as Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of England, Mr. Bradlaugh immediately sent in his resignation". "The report", I added demurely, "seems likely to be a true one". I had not much doubt of the fact, having seen the cancelled certificate.

My second lecture was delivered on September 27th, during the election struggle, at Mr. Moncure D. Conway's Chapel in St. Paul's Road, Camden Town, and was on "The true basis of morality". The lecture was re-delivered a few weeks later at a Unitarian chapel, where the minister was the Rev. Peter Dean, and gave, I was afterwards told, great offence to some of the congregation, especially to Miss Frances Power Cobbe, who declared that she would have left the chapel had not the speaker been a woman. The ground of complaint was that the suggested "basis" was Utilitarian and human instead of Intuitional and The-

istic. Published as a pamphlet, the lecture has reached its seventh thousand.

In October I had a severe attack of congestion of the lungs, and soon after my recovery I left Norwood to settle in London. I found that my work required that I should be nearer head-quarters, and I arranged to rent part of a house—19, Westbourne Park Terrace, Bayswater—two lady friends taking the remainder. The arrangement proved a very comfortable one, and it continued until my improved means enabled me, in 1876, to take a house of my own.

In January, 1875, I made up my mind to lecture regularly, and in the *National Reformer* for January 17th I find the announcement that "Mrs. Annie Besant (Ajax) will lecture at South Place Chapel, Finsbury, on 'Civil and religious liberty'". Mr. Conway took the chair at this first identification of "Ajax" with myself, and sent a very kindly notice of the lecture to the *Cincinnati Commercial*. Mr. Charles Watts wrote a report in the *National Reformer* of January 24th. Dr. Maurice Davies also wrote a very favorable article in a London journal, but unfortunately he knew Mr. Walter Besant, who persuaded him to suppress my name, so that although the notice appeared it did me no service. My struggle to gain my livelihood was for some time rendered considerably more difficult by this kind of ungenerous and underhand antagonism. A woman's road to the earning of her own living, especially when she is weighted with the care of a young child, is always fairly thorny at the outset, and does not need to be rendered yet more difficult by secret attempts to injure, on the part of those who trust that suffering and poverty may avail to bend pride to submission.

My next lecture was given in the Theatre Royal, Northampton, and in the *National Reformer* of February 14th appears for the first time my list of lecturing engagements, so that in February next I shall complete my first decade of lecturing for the Freethought and Republican Cause. Never, since first I stood on the Freethought platform, have I felt one hour's regret for the resolution taken in solitude in January, 1875, to devote to that sacred Cause every power of brain and tongue that I possessed. Not lightly was that resolution taken, for I know no task of weightier responsibility than that of standing forth as

teacher, and swaying thousands of hearers year after year. But I pledged my word then to the Cause I loved that no effort on my part should be wanting to render myself worthy of the privilege of service which I took; that I would read, and study, and would train every faculty that I had; that I would polish my language, discipline my thought, widen my knowledge; and this, at least, I may say, that if I have written and spoken much I have studied and thought more, and that at least I have not given to my mistress, Liberty, that "which hath cost me nothing".

A queer incident occurred on February 17th. I had been invited by the Dialectical Society to read a paper, and selected for subject "The existence of God". The Dialectical Society had for some years held their meetings in a room in Adam Street rented from the Social Science Association. When the members gathered as usual on this 17th February, the door was found closed, and they were informed that Ajax's paper had been too much for the Social Science nerves, and that entrance to the ordinary meeting-place was henceforth denied. We found refuge in the Charing Cross Hotel, where we speculated merrily on the eccentricities of religious charity.

On February 12th, I started on my first lecturing tour in the provinces. After lecturing at Birkenhead on the evening of that day, I started by the night mail for Glasgow. Some races—dog races, I think—had been going on, and very unpleasant were many of the passengers waiting on the platform. Some Birkenhead friends had secured me a compartment, and watched over me till the train began to move. Then, after we had fairly started, the door was flung open by a porter and a man was thrust in who half tumbled on to the seat. As he slowly recovered, he stood up, and as his money rolled out of his hand on to the floor and he gazed vaguely at it, I saw, to my horror, that he was drunk. The position was pleasant, for the train was an express and was not timed to stop for a considerable time. My odious fellow-passenger spent some time on the floor hunting for his scattered coins. Then he slowly gathered himself up, and presently became conscious of my presence. He studied me for some time and then proposed to shut the window. I assented quietly, not wanting to discuss a trifle, and feeling in deadly terror. Alone at night in an express, with a man not drunk enough

to be helpless but too drunk to be controlled. Never, before or since, have I felt so thoroughly frightened, but I sat there quiet and unmoved, only grasping a penknife in my pocket, with a desperate resolve to use my feeble weapon as soon as the need arose. The man had risen again to his feet and had come over to me, when a jarring noise was heard and the train began to slacken.

"What is that?" stammered my drunken companion.

"They are putting on the brakes to stop the train," I said very slowly and distinctly, though a very passion of relief made it hard to say quietly the measured words.

The man sat down stupidly, staring at me, and in a minute or two more the train pulled up at a station. It had been stopped by signal. In a moment I was at the window, calling the guard. I rapidly explained to him that I was travelling alone, that a half-drunken man was with me, and I begged him to put me into another carriage. With the usual kindliness of a railway official, the guard at once moved my baggage and myself into an empty compartment, into which he locked me, and he kept a friendly watch over me at every station at which we stopped until he landed me safely at Glasgow.

At Glasgow a room had been taken for me at a Temperance Hotel, and it seemed to me a new and lonely sort of thing to be "on my own account" in a strange city in a strange hotel. By the way, why are Temperance Hotels so often lacking in cleanliness? Surely abstinence from wine and superfluity of "matter in the wrong place" need not necessarily be correlated in hotel-life, and yet my experience leads me to look for the twain together. Here and there I have been to Temperance Hotels in which water is used for other purposes than that of drinking, but these are, I regret to say, the exceptions to a melancholy rule.

From Glasgow I went north to Aberdeen, and from Aberdeen home again to London. A long weary journey that was, in a third-class carriage in the cold month of February, but the labor had in it a joy that outpaid all physical discomfort, and the feeling that I had found my work in the world gave a new happiness to my life.

I reported my doings to the chief of our party in America, and found them only half approved. "You should have waited till I returned, and at least I could have saved you

some discomforts," he wrote; but the discomforts troubled me little, and I think I rather preferred the independent launch out into lecturing work, trusting only to my own courage and ability to win my way. So far as health was concerned, the lecturing acted as a tonic. My chest had always been a little delicate, and when I consulted a doctor on the possibility of my lecturing he answered: "It will either kill you or cure you". It has entirely cured the lung weakness, and I have grown strong and vigorous instead of being frail and delicate as of old.

On February 28th I delivered my first lecture at the Hall of Science, London, and was received with that warmth of greeting which Freethinkers are ever willing to extend to one who sacrifices aught to join their ranks. From that day to this that hearty welcome at our central London hall has never failed me, and the love and courage wherewith Freethinkers have ever stood by me have overpaid a thousandfold any poor services I have been fortunate enough to render to the common cause.

It would be wearisome to go step by step over the ten years' journeys and lectures; I will only select, here and there, incidents illustrative of the whole.

Some folk say that the lives of Freethought lecturers are easy, and that their lecturing tours are lucrative in the extreme. On one occasion I spent eight days in the north lecturing daily, with three lectures on the two Sundays, and made a deficit of 11s. on the journey! I do not pretend that such a thing would happen now, but I fancy that every Freethought lecturer could tell of a similar experience in the early days of "winning his way".

There is no better field for Freethought and Radical work than Northumberland and Durham; the miners there are as a rule shrewd and hard-headed men, and very cordial is the greeting given by them to those whom they have reason to trust. At Seghill and at Bedlington I have slept in their cottages and have been welcomed to their tables, and I remember one evening at Seghill, after a lecture, that my host invited about a dozen miners to supper to meet me; the talk ran on politics, and I soon found that my companions knew more of English politics and had a far shrewder notion of political methods than I had found among the ordinary "diners-out" in "society". They were of the "uneducated" class despised by "gentle-

men" and had not the vote, but politically they were far better educated than their social superiors, and were far better fitted to discharge the duties of citizenship.

On May 16th I attended, for the first time, the Annual Conference called by the National Secular Society. It was held at Manchester, in the Society's rooms in Grosvenor Street, and it is interesting and encouraging to note how the Society has grown and strengthened since that small meeting held nearly ten years ago. Mr. Bradlaugh was elected President; Messrs. A. Trevelyan, T. Slater, C. Watts, C. C. Cattell, R. A. Cooper, P. A. V. Le Lubez, N. Ridgway, G. W. Foote, G. H. Reddalls, and Mrs. Besant Vice Presidents. Messrs. Watts and Standring were elected as Secretary and Assistant-Secretary—both offices were then honorary, for the Society was too poor to pay the holders—and Mr. Le Lubez Treasurer. The result of the Conference was soon seen in the energy infused into the Freethought propaganda, and from that time to this the Society has increased in numbers and in influence, until that which was scarcely more than a skeleton has become a living power in the land on the side of all social and political reforms. The Council for 1875 consisted of but thirty-nine members, including President, Vice-Presidents, and Secretary, and of these only nine were available as a Central Executive. Let Freethinkers compare this meagre list with the present, and then let them "thank" man "and take courage".

Lecturing at Leicester in June, I came for the first time across a falsehood of which I have since heard plenty. An irate Christian declared that I was responsible for a book entitled the "Elements of Social Science", which was, he averred, the "Bible of Secularists". I had never heard of the book, but as he insisted that it was in favor of the abolition of marriage, and that Mr. Bradlaugh agreed with it, I promptly contradicted him, knowing that Mr. Bradlaugh's views on marriage were conservative rather than revolutionary. On enquiry afterwards I found that the book in question had been written some years before by a Doctor of Medicine, and had been sent for review by its publisher to the *National Reformer* among other papers. I found further that it consisted of three parts; the first dealt with the sexual relation, and advocated, from the standpoint of an experienced medical man, what

is roughly known as "free love"; the second was entirely medical, dealing with diseases; the third consisted of a very clear and able exposition of the law of population as laid down by Malthus, and insisted—as John Stuart Mill had done—that it was the duty of married persons to voluntarily limit their families within their means of subsistence. Mr. Bradlaugh, in the *National Reformer*, in reviewing the book, stated that it was written "with honest and pure intent and purpose", and recommended to working men the exposition of the law of population. Because he did this Christians and Tories who desire to injure him still insist that he shares the author's views on sexual relations, and despite his reiterated contradictions, they quote detached pieces of the work, speaking against marriage, as containing his views. Anything more meanly vile and dishonest than this it would be difficult to imagine, yet such are the weapons used against Atheists in a Christian country. Unable to find in Mr. Bradlaugh's own writings anything to serve their purpose, they take isolated passages from a book he neither wrote nor published, but once reviewed with a recommendation of a part of it which says nothing against marriage.

That the book is a remarkable one and deserves to be read has been acknowledged on all hands. Personally, I cordially dislike a large part of it, and dissent utterly from its views on the the marital relation, but none the less I feel sure that the writer is an honest, good, and right meaning man. In the *Reasoner*, edited by Mr. George Jacob Holyoake, I find warmer praise of it than in the *National Reformer*; in the review the following passage appears:—

"In some respects all books of this class are evils: but it would be weakness and criminal prudery—a prudery as criminal as vice itself—not to say that such a book as the one in question is not only a far lesser evil than the one that it combats, but in one sense a book which it is a mercy to issue and courage to publish."

The *Examiner*, reviewing the same book, declared it to be

"A very valuable, though rather heterogeneous book. . . . . This is, we believe, the only book that has fully, honestly, and in a scientific spirit recognised all the elements in the problem —How are mankind to triumph over poverty, with its train of

attendant evils?—and fearlessly endeavored to find a practical solution."

The *British Journal of Homœopathy* wrote:

"Though quite out of the province of our journal, we cannot refrain from stating that this work is unquestionably the most remarkable one, in many respects, we have ever met with. Though we differ *toto cœlo* from the author in his views of religion and morality, and hold some of his remedies to tend rather to a dissolution than a reconstruction of society, yet we are bound to admit the benevolence and philanthropy of his motives. The scope of the work is nothing less than the whole field of political economy."

Ernest Jones and others wrote yet more strongly, but out of all these Charles Bradlaugh alone has been selected for reproach, and has had the peculiar views of the anonymous author fathered on himself. Why? The reason is not far to seek. None of the other writers are active Radical politicians, dangerous to the luxurious idleness of the non-producing but all-consuming "upper classes" of society. These know how easy it is to raise social prejudice against a man by setting afloat the idea that he desires to "abolish marriage and the home". It is the most convenient poniard and the one most certain to wound. Therefore those whose profligacy is notorious, who welcome into their society the Blandfords, Aylesburys, and St. Leonards, rave against a man as a "destroyer of marriage" whose life is pure, and whose theories on this, as it happens, are "orthodox", merely because his honest Atheism shames their hypocritical professions, and his sturdy Republicanism menaces their corrupt and rotting society.

XIII.

Sometimes my lecturing experiences were not of the smoothest. In June, 1875, I visited Darwen in Lancashire, and found that stone-throwing was considered a fair argument to be addressed to "the Atheist lecturer". On my last visit to that place in May, 1884, large and enthusiastic audiences attended the lectures, and not a sign of hostility

was to be seen outside the hall. At Swansea, in March, 1876, the fear of violence was so great that no local friend had the courage to take the chair for me (a guarantee against damage to the hall had been exacted by the proprietor). I had to march on to the platform in solitary state, introduce myself, and proceed with my lecture. If violence had been intended, none was offered: it would have needed much brutality to charge on to a platform occupied by a solitary woman. (By the way, those who fancy that a lecturer's life is a luxurious one may note that the Swansea lecture spoken of was one of a series of ten, delivered within eight days at Wednesbury, Bilston, Kidderminster, Swansea, and Bristol, most of the travelling being performed through storm, rain, and snow.) On September, 4th, 1876, I had rather a lively time at Hoyland, a village near Barnsley. A Mr. Hebblethwaite, a Primitive Methodist minister, "prepared the way of the" Atheist by pouring out virulent abuse on Atheism in general, and this Atheist in particular; two Protestant missionaries aided him vigorously, exhorting the pious Christians to "sweep Secularists out". The result was a very fair row; I got through the lecture, despite many interruptions, but when it was over a regular riot ensued; the enraged Christians shook their fists at me, swore at me, and finally took to kicking as I passed out to the cab; only one kick, however, reached me, and the attempts to overturn the cab were foiled by the driver, who put his horse at a gallop. A somewhat barbarous village, that same village of Hoyland. Congleton proved even livelier on September 25th and 26th. Mr. Bradlaugh lectured there on September 25th to an accompaniment of broken windows; I was sitting with Mrs. Wolstenholme Elmy in front of the platform, and received a rather heavy blow at the back of the head from a stone thrown by someone in the room. We had a mile and a half to walk from the hall to Mrs. Elmy's house, and this was done in the company of a mud-throwing crowd, who yelled curses, hymns, and foul words with delightful impartiality. On the following evening I was to lecture, and we were escorted to the hall by a stone-throwing crowd; while I was lecturing a man shouted "Put her out!" and a well-known wrestler of the neighborhood, named Burbery, who had come to the hall with seven friends, stood up in the front row and loudly inter-

rupted. Mr. Bradlaugh, who was in the chair, told him to sit down, and as he persisted in making a noise, informed him that he must either be quiet or go out. "Put me out!" said Burbery, striking an attitude. Mr. Bradlaugh left the platform and walked up to the noisy swashbuckler, who at once grappled with him and tried to throw him; but Mr. Burbery had not reckoned on his opponent's strength, and when the "throw" was complete Mr. Burbery was underneath. Amid much excitement Mr. Burbery was propelled to the door, where he was handed over to the police, and the chairman resumed his seat and said "Go on", whereupon on I went and finished the lecture. There was plenty more stone-throwing outside, and Mrs. Elmy received a cut on the temple, but no serious harm was done—except to Christianity.

In the summer of 1875 a strong protest was made by the working classes against the grant of £142,000 for the Prince of Wales visit to India, and on Sunday, July 18th, I saw for the first time one of the famous "Hyde Park Demonstrations". Mr. Bradlaugh called a meeting to support Messrs. Taylor, Macdonald, Wilfrid Lawson, Burt, and the other fourteen members of the House of Commons who voted in opposition to the grant, and to protest against burdening the workers to provide for the amusement of a spendthrift prince. I did not go into the meeting, but, with Mr. Bradlaugh's two daughters, hovered on the outskirts. A woman is considerably in the way in such a gathering, unless the speakers reach the platform in carriages, for she is physically unfitted to push her way through the dense mass of people, and has therefore to be looked after and saved from the crushing pressure of the crowd. I have always thought that a man responsible for the order of such huge gatherings ought not to be burdened in addition with the responsibility of protecting his female friends, and have therefore preferred to take care of myself outside the meetings both at Hyde Park and in Trafalgar Square. The method of organisation by which the London Radicals have succeeded in holding perfectly orderly meetings of enormous size is simple but effective. A large number of "marshals" volunteer, and each of these hands in to Mr. Bradlaugh a list of the "stewards" he is prepared to bring; the "marshals" and "stewards" alike are members of the Radical and Secular associations

of the metropolis. These officials all wear badges, a rosette of the Northampton election colors; directions are given to the marshals by Mr. Bradlaugh himself, and each marshal, with his stewards, turns up at the appointed place at the appointed time, and does the share of the work allotted to him. A ring two or three deep is formed round the place whence the speakers are to address the meeting, and those who form the ring stand linked arm-in-arm, making a living barrier round this empty spot. There a platform, brought thither in pieces, is screwed together, and into this enclosure only the chosen speakers and newspaper reporters are admitted. The marshals and stewards who are not told off for guarding the platform are distributed over the ground which the meeting is to occupy, and act as guardians of order.

The Hyde Park meeting against the royal grant was a thoroughly successful one, and a large number of protests came up from all parts of the country. Being from the poorer classes, they were of course disregarded, but none the less was a strong agitation against royal grants carried on throughout the autumn and winter months. The National Secular Society determined to gather signatures to a "monster petition against royal grants", and the superintendence of this was placed in my hands. The petition was drafted by Mr. Bradlaugh, and ran as follows:—

"To the Honorable the Commons of Great Britain and Ireland, in Parliament Assembled.

"The humble petition of the undersigned,

"Prays,—That no further grant or allowance may be made to any member of the Royal Family until an account shall have been laid before your Honorable House, showing the total real and personal estates and incomes of each and every member of the said Royal Family who shall be in receipt of any pension or allowance, and also showing all posts and places of profit severally held by members of the said Royal Family, and also showing all pensions, if any, formerly charged on any estates now enjoyed by any member or members of the said Royal Family, and in case any such pensions shall have been transferred, showing how and at what date such transfer took place."

Day after day, week after week, month after month, the postman delivered rolls of paper, little and big, each roll containing names and addresses of men and woman who

protested against the waste of public money on our greedy and never-satisfied Royal House. The sheets often bore the marks of the places to which they had been carried; from a mining district some would come coal-dust-blackened, which had been signed in the mines by workers who grudged to idleness the fruits of toil; from an agricultural district the sheets bore often far too many "crosses", the "marks" of those whom Church and landlord had left in ignorance, regarding them only as machines for sowing and reaping. From September, 1875, to March, 1876, they came in steady stream, and each was added to the ever-lengthening roll which lay in one corner of my sitting-room and which assumed ever larger and larger proportions. At last the work was over, and on June 16th, 1876, the "monster"—rolled on a mahogany pole presented by a London friend, and encased in American cloth—was placed in a carriage to be conveyed to the House of Commons; the heading ran: "The petition of the undersigned Charles Bradlaugh, Annie Besant, Charles Watts, and 102,934 others". Unrolled, it was nearly a mile in length, and a very happy time we had in rolling the last few hundred yards. When we arrived at the House, Mr. Bradlaugh and Mr. Watts carried the petition up Westminster Hall, each holding one end of the mahogany pole. Messrs. Burt and Macdonald took charge of the "monster" at the door of the House, and, carrying it in, presented it in due form. The presentation caused considerable excitement both in the House and in the press, and the *Newcastle Daily Chronicle* said some kindly words of the "labor and enthusiasm" bestowed on the petition by myself.

At the beginning of August, 1875, the first attempt to deprive me of my little daughter, Mabel, was made, but fortunately proved unsuccessful. The story of the trick played is told in the *National Reformer* of August 22nd, and I quote it just as it appeared there:—

"PERSONAL.—Mrs. Annie Besant, as some of our readers are aware, was the wife of a Church of England clergyman, the Rev. Frank Besant, Vicar of Sibsey, near Boston, in Lincolnshire. There is no need, *at present*, to say anything about the earlier portion of her married life; but when Mrs. Besant's opinions on religious matters became liberal, the conduct of her husband rendered a separation absolutely necessary, and in 1873 a formal deed of separation was drawn up, and duly

executed. Under this deed Mrs. Besant is entitled to the sole custody and control of her infant daughter Mabel until the child becomes of age, with the proviso that the little girl is to visit her father for one month in each year. Having recently obtained possession of the person of the little child under cover of the annual visit, the Rev. Mr. Besant sought to deprive Mrs. Besant entirely of her daughter, on the ground of Mrs. Besant's Atheism. Vigorous steps were at once taken by Messrs. Lewis and Lewis (to whom our readers will remember we entrusted the case of Mr. Lennard against Mr. Woolrych), by whose advice Mrs. Besant at once went down herself to Sibsey to demand the child; the little girl had been hidden, and was not at the Vicarage, but we are glad to report that Mrs. Besant has, after some little difficulty, recovered the custody of her daughter. It was decided against Percy Bysshe Shelley that an Atheist father could not be the guardian of his own children. If this law be appealed to, and anyone dares to enforce it, we shall contest it step by step; and while we are out of England, we know that in case of any attempt to retake the child by force we may safely leave our new advocate to the protection of the stout arms of our friends, who will see that no injustice of this kind is done her. So far as the law courts are concerned, we have the most complete confidence in Mr. George Henry Lewis, and we shall fight the case to House of Lords if need be. CHARLES BRADLAUGH."

The attempt to take the child from me by force indeed failed, but later the theft was successfully carried out by due process of law. It is always a blunder from a tactical point of view for a Christian to use methods of illegal violence in persecuting an Atheist in this Christian land; legal violence is a far safer weapon, for courage can checkmate the first, while it is helpless before the second. All Christians who adopt the sound old principle that "no faith need be kept with the heretic" should remember that they can always guard themselves against unpleasant consequences by breaking faith under cover of the laws against heresy, which still remain on our Statute Book *ad majorem Dei gloriam*.

In September, 1875, Mr. Bradlaugh again sailed for America, leaving plenty of work to be done by his colleagues before he returned. The Executive of the National Secular Society had determined to issue a "Secular Song Book", and the task of selection and of editing was confided to me. The little book was duly issued, and ran through two editions; then, feeling that it was marred by

many sins both of commission and omission, I set my face against the publication of a third edition, hoping that a compilation more worthy of Free Thought might be made. I am half inclined to take the matter up again, and set to work at a fresh collection.

The delivery and publication of a course of six lectures on the early part of the French Revolution was another portion of that autumn's work; they involved a large amount of labor, as I had determined to tell the story from the people's point of view, and was therefore compelled to read a large amount of the current literature of the time, as well as the great standard histories of Louis Blanc, Michelet, and others. Fortunately for me, Mr. Bradlaugh had a splendid collection of works on the subject, and before he left England he brought to me two cabs full of books, French and English, from all points of view, aristocratic, ecclesiastical, democratic, and I studied these diligently and impartially until the French Revolution became to me as a drama in which I had myself taken part, and the actors therein became personal friends and foes. In this, again, as in so much of my public work, I have to thank Mr. Bradlaugh for the influence which led me to read fully all sides of a question, and to read most carefully those from which I differed most, ere I judged myself competent to write or to speak thereon.

The late autumn was clouded by the news of Mr. Bradlaugh's serious illness in America. After struggling for some time against ill-health he was struck down by an attack of pleurisy, to which soon was added typhoid fever, and for a time lay at the brink of the grave. Dr. Otis, his able physician, finding that it was impossible to give him the necessary attendance at the Fifth Avenue Hotel, put him into his own carriage and drove him to the Hospital of St. Luke's, where he confided him to the care of Dr. Leaming, himself also visiting him daily. Of this illness the *Baltimore Advertiser* wrote:

"Mr. Charles Bradlaugh, the famous English Radical lecturer, has been so very dangerously ill that his life has almost been despaired of. He was taken ill at the Fifth Avenue Hotel, and partially recovered; but on the day upon which a lecture had been arranged from him before the Liberal Club he was taken down a second time with a relapse, which has been very near proving fatal. The cause was overwork and complete

nervous prostration which brought on low fever. His physician has allowed one friend only to see him daily for five minutes, and removed him to St. Luke's Hospital for the sake of the absolute quiet, comfort, and intelligent attendance he could secure there, and for which he was glad to pay munificently. This long and severe illness has disappointed the hopes and retarded the object for which he came to this country; but he is gentleness and patience itself in his sickness in this strange land, and has endeared himself greatly to his physicians and attendants by his gratitude and appreciation of the slightest attention."

There is no doubt that the care so willingly lavished on the English stranger saved his life, and those who in England honor Charles Bradlaugh as chief and love him as friend must always keep in grateful memory those who in his sorest need served him so nobly well. Those who think that an Atheist cannot calmly face the prospect of death might well learn a lesson from the fortitude and courage shown by an Atheist as he lay at the point of death, far from home and from all he loved best. The Rev. Mr. Frothingham bore public and admiring testimony in his own church to Mr. Bradlaugh's perfect serenity, at once fearless and unpretending, and, himself a Theist, gave willing witness to the Atheist's calm strength.

Mr. Bradlaugh returned to England at the end of December, worn to a shadow and terribly weak, and for many a long month he bore the traces of his wrestle with death. Indeed, he felt the effect of the illness for years, for typhoid fever is a foe whose weapons leave scars even after the healing of the wounds it inflicts.

The first work done by Mr. Bradlaugh on resuming the editorial chair of the *National Reformer*, was to indite a vigorous protest against the investment of national capital in the Suez Canal Shares. He exposed the financial condition of Egypt, gave detail after detail of the Khedive's indebtedness, unveiled the rottenness of the Egyptian Government, warned the people of the danger of taking the first steps in a path which must lead to continual interference in Egyptian finance, denounced the shameful job perpetrated by Mr. Disraeli in borrowing the money for the purchase from the Rothschilds at enormous interest. His protest was, of course, useless, but its justice has been proved by the course of events. The bombarding of

Alexandria, the shameful repression of the national movement in Egypt, the wholesale and useless slaughter in the Soudan, the waste of English lives and English money, the new burden of debt and of responsibility now assumed by the Government, all these are the results of the fatal purchase of shares in the Suez Canal by Mr. Disraeli; yet against the chorus of praise which resounded from every side when the purchase was announced, but one voice of disapproval and of warning was raised at first; others soon caught the warning and saw the dangers it pointed out, but for awhile Charles Bradlaugh stood alone in his opposition, and to him belongs the credit of at once seeing the peril which lay under the purchase.

The 1876 Conference of the National Secular Society held at Leeds showed the growing power of the organisation, and was made notable by a very pleasant incident—the presentation to a miner, William Washington, of a silver tea-pot and some books, in recognition of a very noble act of self-devotion. An explosion had occurred on December 6th, 1875, at Swaithe Main pit, in which 143 miners were killed; a miner belonging to a neighboring pit, named William Washington, an Atheist, when every one was hanging back, sprang into the cage to descend into the pit in forlorn hope of rescue, when to descend seemed almost certain death. Others swiftly followed the gallant volunteer, but he had set the example, and it was felt by the Executive of the National Secular Society that his heroism deserved recognition. William Washington set his face against any gift to himself, so the subscription to a testimonial was limited to 6d., and a silver teapot was presented to him for his wife and some books for his children. At this same Conference a committee was appointed, consisting of Messrs. Charles Bradlaugh, G. J. Holyoake, C. Watts, R. A. Cooper, — Gimson, T. Slater, and Mrs. Besant, to draw up a fresh statement of the principles and objects of the National Secular Society; it was decided that this statement should be submitted to the ensuing Conference, that the deliberation on the report of the Committee should "be open to all Freethinkers, but that only those will be entitled to vote on the ratification who declare their determination to enter the Society on the basis of the ratified constitution". It was hoped that by this means various scattered and independent

societies might be brought into union, and that the National Secular Society might be thereby strengthened. The committee held a very large number of meetings and finally decided on the following statement, which was approved of at the Conference held at Nottingham in 1877, and stands now as the "Principles and Object of the National Secular Society":—

"The National Secular Society has been formed to maintain the principles and rights of Freethought, and to direct their application to the Secular improvement of this life.

"By the principle of Freethought is meant the exercise of the understanding upon relevant facts, and independently of penal or priestly intimidation.

"By the rights of Freethought are meant the liberty of free criticism for the security of truth, and the liberty of free publicity for the extension of truth.

"Secularism relates to the present existence of man, and to actions the issue of which can be tested by experience.

"It declares that the promotion of human improvement and happiness is the highest duty, and that morality is to be tested by utility.

"That in order to promote effectually the improvement and happiness of mankind, every individual of the human family ought to be well placed and well instructed, and that all who are of a suitable age ought to be usefully employed for their own and the general good.

"That human improvement and happiness cannot be effectually promoted without civil and religious liberty; and that, therefore, it is the duty of every individual to actively attack all barriers to equal freedom of thought and utterance for all, upon political, theological, and social subjects.

"A Secularist is one who deduces his moral duties from considerations which pertain to this life, and who, practically recognising the above duties, devotes himself to the promotion of the general good.

"The object of the National Secular Society is to disseminate the above principles by every legitimate means in its power."

At this same Conference of Leeds was inaugurated the subscription to the statue to be erected in Rome to the memory of Giordano Bruno, burned in that city for Atheism in 1600; this resulted in the collection of £60.

The Executive appointed by the Leeds Conference made great efforts to induce the Freethinkers of the country to work for the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws, and in October

1876 they issued a copy of a petition against those evil laws to every one of the forty branches of the Society. The effort proved, however, of little avail. The laws had not been put in force for a long time, and were regarded with apathy as being obsolete, and it has needed the cruel imprisonments inflicted by Mr. Justice North on Messrs. Foote, Ramsey, and Kemp, to arouse the Freethought party to a sense of their duty in the matter.

The year 1877 had scarcely opened ere we found ourselves with a serious fight on our hands. A pamphlet written early in the present century by Charles Knowlton, M.D., entitled "The Fruits of Philosophy", which had been sold unchallenged in England for nearly forty years, was suddenly seized at Bristol as an obscene publication. The book had been supplied in the ordinary course of business by Mr. Charles Watts, but the Bristol bookseller had altered its price, had inserted some indecent pictures in it, and had sold it among literature to which the word obscene was fairly applied. In itself, Dr. Knowlton's work was merely a physiological treatise, and it advocated conjugal prudence and parental responsibility; it argued in favor of early marriage, but as overlarge families among persons of limited incomes imply either pauperism, or lack of necessary food, clothing, education, and fair start in life for the children, Dr. Knowlton advocated the restriction of the number of the family within the means of existence, and stated the means by which this restriction should be carried out. On hearing of the prosecution, Mr. Watts went down to Bristol, and frankly announced himself as the publisher of the book. Soon after his return to London he was arrested on the charge of having published an obscene book, and was duly liberated on bail. Mr. and Mrs. Watts, Mr. Bradlaugh and myself met to arrange our plan of united action on Friday, January 12th, and it was decided that Mr. Watts should defend the book, that a fund should at once be raised for his legal expenses, and that once more the right of publication of useful knowledge in a cheap form should be defended by the leaders of the Freethought party. After long and friendly discussion we separated with the plan of the campaign arranged, and it was decided that I should claim the sympathy and help of the Plymouth friends, whom I was to address on the following Sunday, January 14th. I went down to

Plymouth on January 13th, and there received a telegram from Mr. Watts, saying that a change of plan had been decided on. I was puzzled, but none the less I appealed for help as I had promised to do, and a collection of £8 1s. 10d. for Mr. Watts' Defence Fund was made after my evening lecture. To my horror, on returning to London, I found that Mr. Watts had given way before the peril of imprisonment, and had decided to plead guilty to the charge of publishing an obscene book, and to throw himself on the mercy of the Court, relying on his previous good character and on an alleged ignorance of the contents of the incriminated work. The latter plea we knew to be false, for Mr. Watts before going down to Bristol to declare himself responsible for the pamphlet had carefully read it and had marked all the passages which, being physiological, might be attacked as "obscene". This marked copy he had sent to the Bristol bookseller, before he himself went to Bristol to attend the trial, and under these circumstances any pretence of ignorance of the contents of the book was transparently inaccurate. Mr. Watts' surrender, of course, upset all the arrangements we had agreed on; Mr. Bradlaugh and myself were prepared to stand by him in battle, but not in surrender. I at once returned to the Secretary of the Plymouth Branch the money collected for defence, not for capitulation, and Mr. Bradlaugh published the following brief statement in the *National Reformer* for January 21st:

"PROSECUTION OF Mr. CHARLES WATTS.—Mr. Charles Watts, as most of our readers will have already learned, has been committed for trial at the Central Criminal Court for February 5th, for misdemeanor, for publication of a work on the population question, entitled "Fruits of Philosophy", by Charles Knowlton, M.D. This book has been openly published in England and America for more than thirty years. It was sold in England by James Watson, who always bore the highest repute. On James Watson's retirement from business it was sold by Holyoake & Co., at Fleet Street House, and was afterwards sold by Mr. Austin Holyoake until the time of his death; and a separate edition was, up till last week, still sold by Mr. Brooks, of 282, Strand, W.C. When Mr. James Watson died, Mr. Charles Watts bought from James Watson's widow a large quantity of stereotype plates, including this work. If this book is to be condemned as obscene, so also in my opinion must be many published by Messrs. W. H. Smith & Son, and other

publishers, against whose respectability no imputation has been made. Such books as Darwin's 'Origin of Species' and 'Descent of Man' must immediately be branded as obscene, while no medical work must be permitted publication; and all theological works, like those of Dulaure, Inman, etc., dealing with ancient creeds, must at once be suppressed. The bulk of the publications of the society for the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts, together with its monthly organ, the *Shield*, would be equally liable. The issue of the greater part of classic authors, and of Lemprière, Shakspere, Sterne, Fielding, Richardson, Rabelais, etc., must be stopped: while the Bible—containing obscene passages omitted from the lectionary—must no longer be permitted circulation. All these contain obscenity which is either inserted to amuse or to instruct, and the medical work now assailed deals with physiological points purely to instruct, and to increase the happiness of men and women.

"If the pamphlet now prosecuted had been brought to me for publication, I should probably have declined to publish it, not because of the subject-matter, but because I do not like its style. If I had once published it, I should defend it until the very last. Here Mr. Watts and myself disagree in opinion; and as he is the person chiefly concerned, it is, of course, right that his decision should determine what is done. He tells me that he thinks the pamphlet indefensible, and that he was misled in publishing it without examination as part of James Watson's stock. I think it ought to be fought right through. Under these circumstances I can only leave Mr. Watts to speak for himself, as we so utterly differ in opinion on this case that I cease to be his proper interpreter. I have, therefore, already offered Mr. Watts the columns of the *National Reformer*, that he may put before the party his view of the case, which he does in another column.—C. BRADLAUGH.

XIV.

Up to this time (January, 1877) Mr. Watts had acted as sub-editor of the *National Reformer*, and printer and publisher of the books and pamphlets issued by Mr. Bradlaugh and myself. The continuance of this common work obviously became impossible after Mr. Watts had determined to surrender one of his publications under threat of prosecution. We felt that for two main reasons we could no longer publicly associate ourselves with him: (1) We could

not retain on our publications the name of a man who had pleaded guilty to the publication of an obscene work; (2) Many of our writings were liable to prosecution for blasphemy, and it was necessary that we should have a publisher who could be relied on to stand firm in time of peril; we felt that if Mr. Watts surrendered one thing he would be likely to surrender others. This feeling on my part was strengthened by the remembrance of a request of his made a few months before, that I would print my own name instead of his as publisher of a political song I had issued, on the ground that it might come within the law of seditious libel. I had readily acceded at the time, but when absolute surrender under attack followed on timid precaution against attack, I felt that a bolder publisher was necessary to me. No particular blame should be laid on persons who are constitutionally timid; they have their own line of usefulness, and are often pleasant and agreeable folk enough; but they are out of place in the front rank of a fighting movement, for their desertion in face of the enemy means added danger for those left to carry on the fight. We therefore decided to sever ourselves from Mr. Watts; and Mr. Bradlaugh, in the *National Reformer* of January 28th, inserted the following statement:

"The divergence of opinion between myself and Mr. Charles Watts is so complete on the Knowlton case, that he has already ceased to be sub-editor of this journal, and I have given him notice determining our connexion on and from March 25th. My reasons for this course are as follows. The Knowlton pamphlet is either decent or indecent. If decent it ought to be defended; if indecent it should never have been published. To judge it indecent is to condemn, with the most severe condemnation, James Watson whom I respected, and Austin Holyoake with whom I worked. I hold the work to be defensible, and I deny the right of any one to interfere with the full and free discussion of social questions affecting the happiness of the nation. The struggle for a free press has been one of the marks of the Freethought Party throughout its history, and as long as the Party permits me to hold its flag, I will never voluntarily lower it. I have no right and no power to dictate to Mr. Watts the course he should pursue, but I have the right and duty to refuse to associate my name with a submission which is utterly repugnant to my nature, and inconsistent with my whole career."

After a long discussion, Mr. Bradlaugh and I made up

our minds as to the course we would pursue. We decided that we would never again place ourselves at a publisher's mercy, but would ensure the defence of all we published by publishing everything ourselves; we resolved to become printers and publishers, and to take any small place we could find and open it as a Freethought shop. I undertook the sub-editorship of the *National Reformer*, and the weekly Summary of News, which had hitherto been done by Mr. Watts, was placed in the hands of Mr. Bradlaugh's daughters. The next thing to do was to find a publishing office. Somewhere within reach of Fleet Street the office must be; small it must be, as we had no funds and the risk of starting a business of which we knew nothing was great. Still "all things are possible to" those who are resolute; we discovered a tumble-down little place in Stonecutter Street and secured it by the good offices of our friend, Mr. Charles Herbert; we borrowed a few hundred pounds from personal friends, and made our new tenement habitable; we drew up a deed of partnership, founding the "Freethought Publishing Company", Mr. Bradlaugh and myself being the only partners; we engaged Mr. W. J. Ramsey as manager of the business; and in the *National Reformer* of February 25th we were able to announce:

"The publishing office of the *National Reformer* and of all the works of Charles Bradlaugh and Annie Besant is now at 28, Stonecutter Street, E.C., three doors from Farringdon Street, where the manager, Mr. W. J. Ramsey, will be glad to receive orders for the supply of any Freethought literature".

A week later we issued the following address:

"ADDRESS FROM THE FREETHOUGHT PUBLISHING COMPANY TO THE READERS OF THE 'NATIONAL REFORMER'.

"When the prospectus of the *National Reformer* was issued by the founder, Charles Bradlaugh, in 1859, he described its policy as 'Atheistic in theology, Republican in politics, and Malthusian in social economy', and a free platform was promised and has been maintained for the discussion of each of these topics. In ventilating the population question the stand taken by Mr. Bradlaugh, both here and on the platform, is well known to our old readers, and many works bearing on this vital subject have been advertised and reviewed in these columns. In this the *National Reformer* has followed the course pursued by Mr. George Jacob Holyoake, who in 1853 published a 'Freethought Directory', giving a list of the various books

supplied from the 'Fleet Street House', and which list contained amongst others:

"'Anti-Marcus on the Population Question.'
"Fowler's Tracts on Physiology, etc.
"Dr. C. Knowlton's 'Fruits of Philosophy'.
"'Moral Physiology: a plain treatise on the Population Question.'

"In this Directory Mr. G. J. Holyoake says:

"'No. 147 Fleet Street is a Central Secular Book Depôt, where all works extant in the English language on the side of Freethought in Religion, Politics, Morals, and Culture are kept in stock, or are procured at short notice.'

"We shall try to do at 28 Stonecutter Street that which Mr. Holyoake's Directory promised for Fleet Street House.

"The partners in the Freethought Publishing Company are Annie Besant and Charles Bradlaugh, who have entered into a legal partnership for the purpose of sharing the legal responsibility of the works they publish.

"We intend to publish nothing that we do not think we can morally defend. All that we do publish we shall defend. We do not mean that we shall agree with all we publish, but we shall, so far as we can, try to keep the possibility of free utterance of earnest, honest opinion.

"It may not be out of place here to remind new readers of this journal of that which old readers well know, that no articles are editorial except those which are unsigned or bear the name of the editor, or that of the sub-editor; for each and every other article the author is allowed to say his own say in his own way; the editor only furnishes the means to address our readers, leaving to him or to her the right and responsibility of divergent thought.

"Annie Besant.
"Charles Bradlaugh."

Thus we found ourselves suddenly launched on a new undertaking, and with some amusement and much trepidation I realised that I was "in business", with business knowledge amounting to *nil*. I had, however, fair ability and plenty of goodwill, and I determined to learn my work, feeling proud that I had become one of the list of "Freethought publishers", who published for love of the cause of freedom, and risked all for the triumph of a principle ere it wore "silver slippers and walked in the sunshine with applause".

On February 8th Mr. Watts was tried at the Old Bailey. He withdrew his plea of "Not Guilty", and pleaded

"Guilty". His counsel urged that he was a man of good character, that Mr. George Jacob Holyoake had sold the incriminated pamphlet, that Mr. Watts had bought the stereo-plates of it in the stock of the late Mr. Austin Holyoake, which he had taken over bodily, and that he had never read the book until after the Bristol investigation. "Mr. Watts pledges himself to me", the counsel stated, "that he was entirely ignorant of the contents of this pamphlet until he heard passages read from it in the prosecution at Bristol". The counsel for the prosecution pointed out that this statement was inaccurate, and read passages from Mr. Watts' deposition made on the first occasion at Bristol, in which Mr. Watts stated that he had perused the book, and was prepared to justify it as a medical work. He, however, did not wish to press the case, if the plates and stock were destroyed, and Mr. Watts was accordingly discharged on his own recognisances in £500 to come up for judgment when called on.

While this struggle was raging, an old friend of Mr. Bradlaugh's, Mr. George Odger, was slowly passing away; the good old man lay dying in his poor lodgings in High Street, Oxford Street, and I find recorded in the *National Reformer* of March 4th, that on February 28th we had been to see him, and that "he is very feeble and is, apparently, sinking fast; but he is as brave and bright, facing his last enemy, as he has ever been facing his former ones". He died on March 4th, and was buried in Brompton Cemetery on the 10th of the same month.

A grave question now lay before us for decision. The Knowlton pamphlet had been surrendered; was that surrender to stand as the last word of the Freethought party on a book which had been sold by the most prominent men in its ranks for forty years? To our minds such surrender, left unchallenged, would be a stain on all who submitted to it, and we decided that faulty as the book was in many respects it had yet become the symbol of a great principle, of the right to circulate physiological knowledge among the poor in pamphlets published at a price they could afford to pay. Deliberately counting the risk, recognising that by our action we should subject ourselves to the vilest slander, knowing that Christian malice would misrepresent and ignorance would echo the misrepresentation—we yet resolved that the sacrifice must be made, and

made by us in virtue of our position in the Freethought Party. If the leaders flinched how could the followers be expected to fight? The greatest sacrifice had to be made by Mr. Bradlaugh. How would an indictment for publishing an obscene book affect his candidature for Northampton? What a new weapon for his foes, what a new difficulty for his friends! I may say here that our worst forebodings were realised by the event; we have been assailed as "vendors of obscene literature", as "writers of obscene books", as "living by the circulation of filthy books". And it is because such accusations have been widely made that I here place on permanent record the facts of the case, for thus, at least, some honest opponents will learn the truth and will cease to circulate the slanders they may have repeated in ignorance.

On February 27th our determination to republish the Knowlton pamphlet was announced by Mr. Bradlaugh in an address delivered by him at the Hall of Science on "The Right of Publication". Extracts from a brief report, published in the *National Reformer* of March 11th, will show the drift of his statement:

"Mr. Bradlaugh was most warmly welcomed to the platform, and reiterated cheers greeted him as he rose to make his speech. Few who heard him that evening will forget the passion and the pathos with which he spoke. The defence of the right to publish was put as strongly and as firmly as words could put it, and the determination to maintain that right, in dock and in jail as on the platform, rang out with no uncertain sound. Truly, as the orator said: 'The bold words I have spoken from this place would be nothing but the emptiest brag and the coward's boast, if I flinched now in the day of battle'. Every word of praise of the fighters of old would fall in disgrace on the head of him who spoke it, if when the time came to share in their peril he shrunk back from the danger of the strife. . . . . Mr. Bradlaugh drew a graphic picture of the earlier struggles for a free press, and then dealt with the present state of the law; from that he passed on to the pamphlet which is the test-question of the hour; he pointed out how some parts of it were foolish, such as the 'philosophical proem', but remarked that he knew no right in law to forbid the publication of all save wisdom; he then showed how, had he originally been asked to publish the pamphlet, he should have raised some objections to its style, but that was a very different matter from permitting the authorities to stop its sale; the style of many books might be faulty without the books being therefore

obscene. He contended the book was a perfectly moral medical work, and was no more indecent than every other medical work dealing with the same subject. The knowledge it gave was useful knowledge; many a young man might be saved from disease by such a knowledge as was contained in the book; if it was argued that such books should not be sold at so cheap a rate, he replied that it was among the masses that such physiological knowledge was needed, 'and if there is one subject above all others', he exclaimed, 'for which a man might gladly sacrifice his hopes and his life, surely it is for that which would relieve his fellow-men from poverty, the mother of crimes, and would make happy homes where now only want and suffering reign'. He had fully counted the cost; he knew all he might lose; but Carlile before him had been imprisoned for teaching the same doctrine, 'and what Carlile did for his day, I, while health and strength remain, will do for mine'."

The position we took up in republishing the pamphlet was clearly stated in the preface which we wrote for it, and which I here reprint, as it gives plainly and briefly the facts of the case:

"PUBLISHERS' PREFACE TO DR. KNOWLTON'S 'FRUITS OF PHILOSOPHY'.

"The pamphlet which we now present to the public is one which has been lately prosecuted under Lord Campbell's Act, and which we now republish in order to test the right of publication. It was originally written by Charles Knowlton, M.D., an American physician, whose degree entitles him to be heard with respect on a medical question. It is openly sold and widely circulated in America at the present time. It was first published in England, about forty years ago, by James Watson, the gallant Radical who came to London and took up Richard Carlile's work when Carlile was in jail. He sold it unchallenged for many years, approved it, and recommended it. It was printed and published by Messrs. Holyoake and Co., and found its place, with other works of a similar character, in their 'Freethought Directory' of 1853, and was thus identified with Freethought literature at the then leading Freethought *depôt*. Mr. Austin Holyoake, working in conjunction with Mr. Bradlaugh at the *National Reformer* office, Johnson's Court, printed and published it in his turn, and this well-known Freethought advocate, in his 'Large or Small Families', selected this pamphlet, together with R. D. Owen's 'Moral Physiology' and the 'Elements of Social Science', for special recommendation. Mr. Charles Watts, succeeding to Mr. Austin Holyoake's business, continued the sale, and when Mr. Watson died in 1875, he bought the plates of the work (with others) from

Mrs. Watson, and continued to advertise and to sell it until December 23rd, 1876. For the last forty years the book has thus been identified with Freethought, advertised by leading Freethinkers, published under the sanction of their names, and sold in the head-quarters of Freethought literature. If during this long period the party has thus—without one word of protest—circulated an indecent work, the less we talk about Freethought morality the better; the work has been largely sold, and if leading Freethinkers have sold it—profiting by the sale—in mere carelessness, few words could be strong enough to brand the indifference which thus scattered obscenity broadcast over the land. The pamphlet has been withdrawn from circulation in consequence of the prosecution instituted against Mr. Charles Watts, but the question of its legality or illegality has not been tried; a plea of 'Guilty' was put in by the publisher, and the book, therefore, was not examined, nor was any judgment passed upon it; no jury registered a verdict, and the judge stated that he had not read the work.

"We republish this pamphlet, honestly believing that on all questions affecting the happiness of the people, whether they be theological, political, or social, fullest right of free discussion ought to be maintained at all hazards. We do not personally endorse all that Dr. Knowlton says: his 'Philosophical Proem' seems to us full of philosophical mistakes, and—as we are neither of us doctors—we are not prepared to endorse his medical views; but since progress can only be made through discussion, and no discussion is possible where differing opinions are suppressed, we claim the right to publish all opinions, so that the public, enabled to see all sides of a question, may have the materials for forming a sound judgment.

"The alterations made are very slight; the book was badly printed, and errors of spelling and a few clumsy grammatical expressions have been corrected; the sub-title has been changed, and in one case four lines have been omitted, because they are repeated word for word further on. We have, however, made some additions to the pamphlet, which are in all cases kept distinct from the original text. Physiology has made great strides during the past forty years, and not considering it right to circulate erroneous physiology, we submitted the pamphlet to a doctor in whose accurate knowledge we have the fullest confidence, and who is widely known in all parts of the world as the author of the "Elements of Social Science"; the notes signed "G. R." are written by this gentleman. References to other works are given in foot notes for the assistance of the reader, if he desires to study the subject further.

"Old Radicals will remember that Richard Carlile published a work entitled 'Every Woman's Book', which deals with the same subject, and advocates the same object, as Dr. Knowlton's

pamphlet. R. D. Owen objected to the 'style and tone' of Carlile's 'Every Woman's Book' as not being 'in good taste', and he wrote his 'Moral Physiology', to do in America what Carlile's work was intended to do in England. This work of Carlile's was stigmatised as 'indecent' and 'immoral' because it advocated, as does Dr. Knowlton's, the use of preventive checks to population. In striving to carry on Carlile's work, we cannot expect to escape Carlile's reproach, but whether applauded or condemned we mean to carry it on, socially as well as politically and theologically.

"We believe, with the Rev. Mr. Malthus, that population has a tendency to increase faster than the means of existence, and that *some* checks must therefore exercise control over population; the checks now exercised are semi-starvation and preventible disease; the enormous mortality among the infants of the poor is one of the checks which now keeps down the population. The checks that ought to control population are scientific, and it is these which we advocate. We think it more moral to prevent the conception of children, than, after they are born, to murder them by want of food, air, and clothing. We advocate scientific checks to population, because, so long as poor men have large families, pauperism is a necessity, and from pauperism grow crime and disease. The wage which would support the parents and two or three children in comfort and decency is utterly insufficient to maintain a family of twelve or fourteen, and we consider it a crime to bring into the world human beings doomed to misery or to premature death. It is not only the hand-working classes which are concerned in this question. The poor curate, the struggling man of business, the young professional man, are often made wretched for life by their inordinately large families, and their years are passed in one long battle to live; meanwhile the woman's health is sacrificed and her life embittered from the same cause. To all of these, we point the way of relief and of happiness; for the sake of these we publish what others fear to issue, and we do it, confident that if we fail the first time, we shall succeed at last, and that the English public will not permit the authorities to stifle a discussion of the most important social question which can influence a nation's welfare.

"CHARLES BRADLAUGH.
"ANNIE BESANT."

We advertised the sale of the pamphlet in the *National Reformer* of March 25th (published March 22nd) in the following words:

FRUITS OF PHILOSOPHY. By CHARLES KNOWLTON, M.D. PRICE SIXPENCE.

This Pamphlet will be republished on Saturday, March 24th, *in*

extenso, with some additional Medical Notes by a London Doctor of Medicine. It will be on sale at 28, Stonecutter Street, E.C., after 4 p.m. until close of shop. No one need apply before this time, as none will be on sale. Mr. Charles Bradlaugh and Mrs. Annie Besant will be in attendance from that hour, and will sell personally the first hundred copies.

FREETHOUGHT PUBLISHING COMPANY, 28, Stonecutter Street, E.C.

In addition to this we ourselves delivered copies on March 23rd to Mr. Martin, the Chief Clerk of the magistrates at Guildhall, to the officer in charge at the City Police Office in Old Jewry, and to the Solicitor for the City of London. With each pamphlet we handed in a notice that we should attend personally to sell the book on March 24th, at Stonecutter Street, from 4 to 5 p.m. These precautions were taken in order to force the authorities to prosecute us, and not any of our subordinates, if they prosecuted at all. The account of the first sale will interest many:

"On Saturday we went down to Stonecutter Street, accompanied by the Misses Bradlaugh and Mr. and Mrs. Touzeau Parris; we arrived at No. 28 at three minutes to four, and found a crowd awaiting us. We promptly filled the window with copies of the pamphlet, as a kind of general notice of the sale within, and then opened the door. The shop was filled immediately, and in twenty minutes over 500 copies were sold. No one sold save Mr. Bradlaugh and myself, but Miss Bradlaugh sorted dozens with a skill that seemed to stamp her as intended by nature for the business, while her sister supplied change with a rapidity worthy of a bank clerk. Several detectives favored us with a visit, and one amused us by coming in and buying two copies from Mr. Bradlaugh, and then retiring gracefully; after an interval of perhaps a quarter of an hour he reappeared, and purchased one from me. Two policemen outside made themselves useful; one patrolled the street calmly, and the other very kindly aided Norrish, Mr. Ramsey's co-worker, in his efforts to keep the stream flowing quietly, without too much pressure. Mr. Bradlaugh's voice was heard warningly from time to time, bidding customers not to crowd, and everything went well and smoothly, save that I occasionally got into fearful muddles in the intricacies of 'trade price'; I disgusted one customer, who muttered roughly 'Ritchie', and who, when I gave him two copies, and put his shilling in the

till, growled: 'I shan't take them'. I was fairly puzzled, till Mr. Bradlaugh enlightened me as to the difficulty, 'Ritchie' to me being unknown; it appeared that 'Ritchie', muttered by the buyer, meant that the copies were wanted by a bookseller of that name, and his messenger was irate at being charged full price. Friends from various parts appeared to give a kindly word; a number of the members of the Dialectical Society came in, and many were the congratulations and promises of aid in case of need. Several who came in offered to come forward as bail, and their names were taken by Mr. Parris. The buyer that most raised my curiosity was one of Mr. Watts' sons, who came in and bought seven copies, putting down only trade-price on the counter; no one is supplied at trade-price unless he buys to sell again, and we have all been wondering why Mr. Watts should intend to sell the Knowlton pamphlet, after he has proclaimed it to be obscene and indecent. At six o'clock the shutters were put up, and we gave up our amateur shop-keeping; our general time for closing on Saturday is 2 p.m., but we kept the shop open on Saturday for the special purpose of selling the Knowlton pamphlet. We sold about 800 copies, besides sending out a large number of country parcels, so that if the police now amuse themselves in seizing the work, they will entirely have failed in stopping its circulation. The pamphlet, during the present week, will have been sold over England and Scotland, and the only effect of the foolish police interference will be to have sold a large edition. We must add one word of thanks to them for the kindly aid given us by their gratuitous advertisement."

[I may note here, in passing, that we printed our edition verbatim from that issued by James Watson, not knowing that various editions were in circulation. It was thereupon stated by Mr. Watts that we had not reprinted the pamphlet for which he was prosecuted, so we at once issued another edition, printed from his own version.]

The help that flowed in to us from all sides was startling both in quantity and quality; a Defence Committee was quickly formed, consisting of the following persons:

"C. R. Drysdale, M.D., Miss Vickery, H. R. S. Dalton, B.A., W. J. Birch, M.A., J. Swaagman, Mrs. Swaagman, P. A. V. Le Lubez, Mdme. Le Lubez, Miss Bradlaugh, Miss H. Brad-

laugh, Mrs. Parris, T. Allsop, E. Truelove, Mark E. Marsden, F. A. Ford, Mrs. Fenwick Miller, G. N. Strawbridge, W. W. Wright, Mrs. Rennick, Mrs. Lowe, W. Bell, Thomas Slater, G. F. Forster, J. Scott, G. Priestley, J. W. White, J. Hart, H. Brooksbank, Mrs. Brooksbank, G. Middleton, J. Child, Ben. W. Elmy, Elizabeth Wolstenholme Elmy, Touzeau Parris (Hon. Sec.), Captain R. H. Dyas, Thomas Roy (President of the Scottish Secular Union), R. A. Cooper, Robert Forder, William Wayham, Mrs. Elizabeth Wayham, Professor Emile Acollas (ancien Professeur de Droit Français à l'Université de Berne), W. Reynolds, C. Herbert, J. F. Haines, H. Rogers (President of the Trunk and Portmanteau Makers' Trade Society), Yves Guyot (Redacteur en chef du *Radical* et du *Bien Public*), W. J. Ramsey, J. Wilks, Mrs. Wilks, J. E. Symes, R. Martin, W. E. Adams, Mrs. Adams, John Bryson (President of the Northumberland Miners' Mutual Confident Association), Ralph Young, J. Grout, Mrs. Grout, General Cluseret, A. Talandier (Member of the Chamber of Deputies), J. Baxter Langley, LL.D., M.R.C.S., F.L.S."

Mrs. Fenwick Miller's letter of adhesion is worthy republication; it puts so tersely the real position:

"59, Francis Terrace. Victoria Park.
"March 31st.

"My dear Mrs. Besant,—I feel myself privileged in having the opportunity of expressing both to you and to the public, by giving you my small aid to your defence, how much I admire the noble position taken up by Mr. Bradlaugh and yourself upon this attempt to suppress free discussion, and to keep the people in enforced ignorance upon the most important of subjects. It is shameful that you should have to do it, through the cowardice of the less important person who might have made himself a hero by doing as you now do, but was too weak for his opportunities. Since you have had to do it, however, accept the assurance of my warm sympathy, and my readiness to aid in any way within my power in your fight. Please add my name to your Committee. You will find a little cheque within: I wish I had fifty times as much to give.

"Under other circumstances, the pamphlet might well have been withdrawn from circulation, since its physiology its obsolete, and consequently its practical deductions to some extent unsound. But it must be everywhere comprehended that *this is not the point*. The book would have been equally attacked had its physiology been new and sound; the prosecution is against the right to issue a work upon the special subject, and against the freedom of the press and individual liberty.—Believe me, yours very faithfully, F. FENWICK MILLER."

Among the many received were letters of encouragement

from General Garibaldi, M. Talandier, Professor Emile Acollas, and the Rev. S. D. Headlam.

As we did not care to be hunted about London by the police, we offered to be at Stonecutter Street daily from 10 to 11 a.m. until we were arrested, and our offer was readily accepted. Friends who were ready to act as bail came forward in large numbers, and we arranged with some of them that they should be within easy access in case of need. There was a little delay in issuing the warrants for our arrest. A deputation from the Christian Evidence Society waited on Mr. (now Sir Richard) Cross, to ask that the Government should prosecute us, and he acceded to their request. The warrants were issued on April 3rd, and were executed on April 5th. The story of the arrest I take from my own article in the *National Reformer*, premising that we had been told that "the warrants were in the hands of Simmons".

"Thursday morning found us again on our way to Stonecutter Street, and as we turned into it we were aware of three gentlemen regarding us affectionately from beneath the shelter of a ladder on the off-side of Farringdon Street. 'That's Simmons,' quoth Mr. Bradlaugh, as we went in, and I shook my head solemnly, regarding 'Simmons' as the unsubstantial shadow of a dream. But as the two Misses Bradlaugh and myself reached the room above the shop, a gay—'I told you so', from Mr. Bradlaugh downstairs, announced a visit, and in another moment Mr. Bradlaugh came up, followed by the three unknown. 'You know what we have come for,' said the one in front; and no one disputed his assertion. Detective-Sergeant R. Outram was the head officer, and he produced his warrant at Mr. Bradlaugh's request; he was accompanied by two detective officers, Messrs. Simmons and Williams. He was armed also with a search warrant, a most useful document, seeing that the last copy of the edition (of 5,000 copies) had been sold on the morning of the previous day, and a high pile of orders was accumulating downstairs, orders which we were unable to fulfil. Mr. Bradlaugh told him, with a twinkle in his eye, that he was too late, but offered him every facility for searching. A large packet of 'Text Books'—left for that purpose by Norrish, if the truth were known—whose covers were the same color as those of the 'Fruits', attracted Mr. Outram's attention, and he took off

some of the brown paper wrapper, but found the goods unseizable. He took one copy of the 'Cause of Woman', by Ben Elmy, and wandered up and down the house seeking for goods to devour, but found nothing to reward him for his energy. Meanwhile we wrote a few telegrams and a note or two, and after about half-an-hour's delay, we started for the police-station in Bridewell Place, arriving there at 10.25. The officers, who showed us every courtesy and kindness consistent with the due execution of their duty, allowed Mr. Bradlaugh and myself to walk on in front, and they followed us across the roar of Fleet Street, down past Ludgate Hill Station, to the Police Office. Here we passed into a fair-sized room, and were requested to go into a funny iron-barred place; it was a large oval railed in, with a brightly polished iron bar running round it, the door closing with a snap. Here we stood while two officers in uniform got out their books; one of these reminded Mr. Bradlaugh of his late visits there, remarking that he supposed the 'gentleman you were so kind to will do you the same good turn now'. Mr. Bradlaugh dryly replied that he didn't think so, accepting service and giving it were two very different things. Our examination then began; names, ages, abodes, birth-places, number of children, color of hair and eyes, were all duly enrolled; then we were measured, and our heights put down; next we delivered up watches, purses, letters, keys—in fact emptied our pockets; then I was walked off by the housekeeper into a neighboring cell and searched—a surely most needless proceeding; it strikes me this is an unnecessary indignity to which to subject an uncondemned prisoner, except in cases of theft, where stolen property might be concealed about the person. It is extremely unpleasant to be handled, and on such a charge as that against myself a search was an absurdity. The woman was as civil as she could be, but, as she fairly enough said, she had no option in the matter. After this, I went back to the room and rejoined my fellow prisoner and we chatted peaceably with our guardians; they quite recognised our object in our proceedings, and one gave it as his opinion that we ought to have been summoned, and not taken by warrant. Taken, however, we clearly were, and we presently drove on to Guildhall, Mr. Outram in the cab with us, and Mr. Williams on the box.

"At Guildhall, we passed straight into the court, through the dock, and down the stairs. Here Mr. Outram delivered us over to the gaoler, and the most uncomfortable part of our experiences began. Below the court are a number of cells, stone floored and whitewashed walled; instead of doors there are heavy iron gates, covered with thick close grating; the passages are divided here and there with similar strong iron gates, only some of which are grated. The rules of the place of course divided the sexes, so Mr. Bradlaugh and myself were not allowed to occupy the same cell; the gaoler, however, did the best he could for us, by allowing me to remain in a section of the passage which separated the men's from the women's cells, and by putting Mr. Bradlaugh into the first of the men's. Then, by opening a little window in the thick wall, a grating was discovered, through which we could dimly see each other. Mr. Bradlaugh's face, as seen from my side, scored all over with the little oblong holes in the grating reflected by the dull glimmer of the gas in the passage, was curious rather than handsome; mine was, probably, not more attractive. In this charming place we passed two hours-and-a-half, and it was very dull and very cold. We solaced ourselves, at first, by reading the *Secular Review*, Mr. Bradlaugh tearing it into pages, and passing them one by one through the grating. By pushing on his side and pulling on mine, we managed to get them through the narrow holes. Our position when we read them was a strange satire on one article (which I read with great pain), which expressed the writer's opinion that the book was so altered as not to be worth prosecuting. Neither the police nor the magistrate recognised any difference between the two editions. As I knew the second edition, taken from Mr. Watts', was almost ready for delivery as I read, I could not help smiling at the idea that no one 'had the courage' to reprint it.

"Mr. Bradlaugh paced up and down his limited kingdom, and after I had finished correcting an *N.R.*, I sometimes walked and sometimes sat, and we chatted over future proceedings, and growled at our long detention, and listened to names of prisoners being called, until we were at last summoned to 'go up higher', and we joyfully obeyed. It was a strange sort of place to stand in, the dock of a police-court; the position struck one as really funny, and everyone who looked at us seemed to feel the same incongruity.

officials, chief clerk, magistrate, all were equally polite, and Mr. Bradlaugh seemed to get his own way from the dock as much as everywhere else. The sitting magistrate was Alderman Figgins, a nice, kindly old gentleman, robed in marvellous, but not uncomely, garments of black velvet, purple, and dark fur. Below the magistrate, on either hand, sat a gentleman writing, one of whom was Mr. Martin, the chief clerk, who took the purely formal evidence required to justify the arrest. The reporters all sat at the right, and Mr. Touzeau Parris shared their bench, sitting on the corner nearest us. Just behind him Mr. Outram had kindly found seats for the two Misses Bradlaugh, who surveyed us placidly, and would, I am sure, had their duty called them to do so, have gladly and willingly changed places with us. The back of the court was filled with kindly faces, and many bright smiles greeted us; among the people were those who so readily volunteered their aid, those described by an official as 'a regular waggon-load of bail'. Their presence there was a most useful little demonstration of support, and the telegrams that kept dropping in also had their effect. 'Another of your friends, Mr. Bradlaugh,' quoth the chief clerk, as the fourth was handed to him, and I hear that the little buff envelopes continued to arrive all the afternoon. I need not here detail what happened in the court, as a full report by a shorthand writer appears in another part of the paper, and I only relate odds and ends. It amused me to see the broad grin which ran round when the detective was asked whether he had executed the seizure warrant, and he answered sadly that there was 'nothing to seize'. When bail was called for, Dr. Drysdale, Messrs. Swaagman, Truelove, and Bell were the first summoned, and no objections being raised to them, nor further securities asked for, these four gentlemen were all that were needed. We were then solemnly and severally informed that we were bound over in our own recognizances of £200 each to appear on Tuesday, April 17th, at eleven o'clock in the forenoon, to answer, etc., etc., etc., to which adjuration I only replied by a polite little bow. After all this we passed into a small room at one side, and there waited till divers papers were delivered unto us, and we were told to depart in peace. A number of people had gathered outside and cheered us warmly as we came out,

one voice calling: 'Bravo! there's some of the old English spirit left yet'. Being very hungry (it was nearly three o'clock), we went off to luncheon, very glad that the warrant was no longer hanging over our heads, and on our way home we bought a paper announcing our arrest. The evening papers all contained reports of the proceedings, as did also the papers of the following morning. I have seen the *Globe*, *Standard*, *Daily News*, *Times*, *Echo*, *Daily Telegraph*, and they all give perfectly fair reports of what took place. It is pleasant that they all seem to recognise that our reason for acting as we have done is a fair and honorable desire to test the right of publication."

XV.

The preliminary investigation before the magistrates at Guildhall duly came on upon April 17th, the prosecution being conducted by Mr. Douglas Straight and Mr. F. Mead. The case was put by Mr. Straight with extreme care and courtesy, the learned counsel stating, "I cannot conceal from myself, or from those who instruct me, that everything has been done in accordance with fairness and *bona fides* on the part of Mr. Bradlaugh and the lady sitting by the side of him". Mr. Straight contended that the good intentions of a publisher could not be taken as proving that a book was not indictable, and laid stress on the cheapness of the work, "the price charged is so little as sixpence". Mr. Bradlaugh proved that there was no physiological statement in Knowlton, which was not given in far fuller detail in standard works on physiology, quoting Carpenter, Dalton, Acton, and others; he showed that Malthus, Professor Fawcett, Mrs. Fawcett, and others, advocated voluntary limitation of the family, establishing his positions by innumerable quotations. A number of eminent men were in Court, subpœnaed to prove their own works, and I find on them the following note, written by myself at the time:—

"We necessarily put some of our medical and publishing witnesses to great inconvenience in summoning them into court, but those who were really most injured were the most courteous. Mr. Trübner, although suffering from a painful ill-

ness, and although we had expressed our willingness to accept in his stead some member of his staff, was present, kindly and pleasant as usual. Dr. Power, a most courteous gentleman, called away from an examination of some 180 young men, never thought of asking that he should be relieved from the citizen's duty, but only privately asked to be released as soon as possible. Dr. Parker was equally worthy of the noble profession to which he belonged, and said he did not want to stay longer than he need, but would be willing to return whenever wanted. Needless to say that Dr. Drysdale was there, ready to do his duty. Dr. W. B. Carpenter was a strange contrast to these; he was rough and discourteous in manner, and rudely said that he was not responsible for 'Human Physiology, by Dr. Carpenter', as his responsibility had ceased with the fifth edition. It seems a strange thing that a man of eminence, presumably a man of honor, should disavow all responsibility for a book which bears his name as author on the title-page. Clearly, if the 'Human Physiology' is not Dr. Carpenter's, the public is grossly deceived by the pretence that it is, and if, as Dr. Carpenter says, the whole responsibility rests on Dr. Power, then that gentleman should have the whole credit of that very useful book. It is not right that Dr. Carpenter should have all the glory and Dr. Power all the annoyance resulting from the work."

Among all the men we came into contact with during the trial, Dr. Carpenter and Professor Fawcett were the only two who shrank from endorsing their own written statements.

The presiding magistrate, Mr. Alderman Figgins, devoted himself gallantly to the unwonted task of wading through physiological text books, the poor old gentleman's hair sometimes standing nearly on end, and his composure being sadly ruffled when he found that Dr. Carpenter's florid treatise, with numerous illustrations of a, to him, startling character, was given to young boys and girls as a prize in Government examinations. He compared Knowlton with the work of Dr. Acton's submitted to him, and said despondingly that one was just the same as the other. At the end of the day the effect made on him by the defence was shown by his letting us go free without bail. Mr. Bradlaugh finished his defence at the next hearing of the case on April 19th, and his concluding remarks, showing the position we took, may well find their place here:

"The object of this book is to circulate amongst the masses

of the poor and wretched (as far as my power will circulate it), and to seek to produce in their minds such prudential views on the subject of population as shall at least hinder some of the horrors to be witnessed amongst the starving. I have not put you to the trouble of hearing proof—even if I were, in this court, permitted to do so—of facts on the Population Question, because the learned counsel for the prosecution, with the frankness which characterises this prosecution, admitted there was the tendency on the part of animated nature to increase until checked by the absence or deficiency of the means of subsistence. This being so, some checks must step in; these checks must be either positive or preventive and prudential. What are positive checks? The learned counsel has told you what they are. They are war, disease, misery, starvation. They are in China—to take a striking instance—accompanied by habits so revolting that I cannot now allude to them. See the numbers of miserable starving children in the great cities and centres of population. Is it right to go to these people and say, 'bring into the world children who cannot live', who all their lives are prevented by the poverty-smitten frames of their parents, and by their own squalid surroundings, from enjoying almost every benefit of the life thrust on them! who inherit the diseases and adopt the crimes which poverty and misery have provided for them? The very medical works I have put in in this case show how true this is in too many cases, and if you read the words of Dr. Acton, crime is sometimes involved of a terrible nature which the human tongue governed by training shrinks from describing. We justly or erroneously believe that we are doing our duty in putting this information in the hands of the people, and we contest this case with no kind of bravado; the penalty we already have to pay is severe enough, for even while we are defending this, some portion of the public press is using words of terrorism against the witnesses to be called, and is describing myself and my co-defendant in a fashion that I feel sure will find no sanction here, and that I hope will never occur again. We contest this because the advocacy of such views on population has been familiar to me for many years. The *Public Journal of Health*, edited by Dr. Hardwicke, the coroner for Central Middlesex, will show you that in 1868 I was known, in relation to this question, to men high in position in the land as original thinkers and political economists; that the late John Stuart Mill has left behind him, in his Autobiography, testimony concerning me on this subject, according unqualified praise to me for the views thereon which I had labored to disseminate; and that Lord Amberley thanked me, in a society of which we were then both associates, for having achieved what I had in bringing these principles to the knowledge of the

poorer classes of the people. With taxation on every hand extending, with the cost of living increasing, and with wages declining—and, as to the last element, I am reminded that recently I was called upon to arbitrate in a wages' dispute in the north of England for a number of poor men, and, having minutely scrutinised every side of the situation, was compelled to reduce their wages by 15 per cent., there having been already a reduction of 35 per cent. in the short space of some twenty months previously—I say, with wages declining, with the necessaries of life growing dearer and still dearer, and with the burden of rent and taxation ever increasing—if, in the presence of such a condition of life among the vast industrial and impoverished masses of this land, I am not to be allowed to tell them how best to prevent or to ameliorate the wretchedness of their lot—if, with all this, I may not speak to them of the true remedy, but the law is to step in and say to me, 'Your mouth is closed'; then, I ask you, what remedy is there remaining by which I am to deal with this awful misery?"

The worthy magistrate duly committed us for trial, accepting our own recognizances in £200 each to appear at the Central Criminal Court on May 7th. To the Central Criminal Court, however, we had not the smallest intention of going, if we could possibly avoid it, so Mr. Bradlaugh immediately took steps to obtain a writ of *certiorari* to remove the indictment to the Court of Queen's Bench. On April 27th Mr. Bradlaugh moved for the writ before Lord Chief Justice Cockburn and Mr. Justice Mellor, and soon after he began his argument the judge stopped him, saying that he would grant the writ if, "upon looking at it we think its object is the legitimate one of promoting knowledge on a matter of human interest, then, lest there should be any miscarriage resulting from any undue prejudice, we might think it is a case for trial by a judge and a special jury. I do not say it is so, mark, but only put it so, that if, on the other hand, science and philosophy are merely made the pretence of publishing a book which is calculated to arouse the passions of those who peruse it, then it follows that we must not allow the pretence to prevail, and treat the case otherwise than as one which may come before anybody to try. If we really think it is a fair question as to whether it is a scientific work or not, and its object is a just one, then we should be disposed to accede to your application, and allow it to be tried by a judge and special jury, and for that purpose allow the

proceedings to be removed into this court. But, before we decide that, we must look into the book and form our own judgment as to the real object of the work."

Two copies of the book were at once handed up to the Bench, and on April 30th the Court granted the writ, the Lord Chief Justice saying: "We have looked at the book which is the subject-matter of the indictment, and we think it really raises a fair question as to whether it is a scientific production for legitimate purposes, or whether it is what the indictment alleged it to be, an obscene publication." Further, the Court accepted Mr. Bradlaugh's recognisances for £400 for the costs of the prosecution.

Some, who have never read the Knowlton pamphlet, glibly denounce it as a filthy and obscene publication. The Lord Chief Justice of England and Mr. Justice Mellor, after reading it, decided to grant a writ which they had determined not to grant if the book had merely a veneer of science and was "calculated to arouse the passions". Christian bigotry has ever since 1877 striven to confound our action with the action of men who sell filth for gain, but only the shameless can persist in so doing when their falsehoods are plainly exposed, as they are exposed here.

The most touching letters from the poor came to us from all parts of the kingdom. One woman, who described herself as "very poor", and who had had thirteen children and was expecting another, wrote saying, "if you want money we will manage to send you my husband's pay one week". An army officer wrote thanking us, saying he had "a wife, seven children, and three servants to keep on 11s. 8d. a day; 5d. per head per diem keeps life in us. The rest for education and raiment." A physician wrote of his hospital experience, saying that it taught him that "less dangerous preventive checks to large families [than over-lactation] should be taught to the lower classes". Many clergymen wrote of their experience among the poor, and their joy that some attempt was being made to teach them how to avoid over-large families, and letter after letter came to me from poor curates' wives, thanking me for daring to publish information of such vital importance. In many places the poor people taxed themselves so much a week for the cost of the defence, because they could not afford any large sum at once.

As soon as we were committed for trial, we resigned our

posts on the Executive of the National Secular Society, feeling that we had no right to entangle the Society in a fight which it had not authorised us to carry on. We stated that we did not desire to relinquish our positions, "but we do desire that the members of the Executive shall feel free to act as they think wisest for the interest of Freethought". The letter was sent to the branches of the Society, and of the thirty-three who answered all, except Burnley and Nottingham, refused to accept our resignation. On the Executive a very clever attempt was made to place us in a difficult position by stating that the resignations were not accepted, but that, as we had resigned, and as the Council had no power to renew appointments made by the Conference, it could not invite us to resume our offices. This ingenious proposal was made by Mr. George Jacob Holyoake, who all through the trial did his best to injure us, apparently because he had himself sold the book long before we had done so, and was anxious to shield himself from condemnation by attacking us. His resolution was carried by five votes to two. Mr. Haines and Mr. Ramsey, detecting its maliciousness, voted against it. The votes of the Branches, of course, decided the question overwhelmingly in our favor, but we declined to sit on the Executive with such a resolution standing, and it was then carried—Mr. Holyoake and Mr. Watts only voting against—that "This Council acknowledge the consideration shown by Mr. Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant for the public repute of the National Secular Society by tendering their resignations, and whilst disclaiming all responsibility for the book, 'Fruits of Philosophy', decline to accept such resignations". So thoroughly did we agree that the Society ought not to be held responsible for our action, that we published the statement: "The Freethought party is no more the endorser of our Malthusianism than it is of our Republicanism, or of our advocacy of Woman Suffrage, or of our support of the North in America, or of the part we take in French politics". I may add that at the Nottingham Conference Mr. Bradlaugh was re-elected President with only four dissentients, the party being practically unanimous in its determination to uphold a Free Press.

The next stage of the prosecution was the seizure of our book packets and letters in the Post-office by the Tory

Government. The "Freethinker's Text Book", the *National Reformer*, and various pamphlets were seized, as well as the "Fruits of Philosophy", and sealed letters were opened. Many meetings were held denouncing the revival of a system of Government *espionage* which, it was supposed, had died out in England, and so great was the commotion raised that a stop was soon put to this form of Government theft, and we recovered the stolen property. On May 15th Mr. Edward Truelove was attacked for the publication of Robert Dale Owen's "Moral Physiology", and of a pamphlet entitled "Individual, Family, and National Poverty", and as both were pamphlets dealing with the Population Question, Mr. Truelove's case was included in the general defence.

Among the witnesses we desired to subpœna was Charles Darwin, as we needed to use passages from his works; he wrote back a most interesting letter, telling us that he disagreed with preventive checks to population on the ground that over-multiplication was useful, since it caused a struggle for existence in which only the strongest and the ablest survived, and that he doubted whether it was possible for preventive checks to serve as well as positive. He asked us to avoid calling him if we could: "I have been for many years much out of health, and have been forced to give up all society or public meetings, and it would be great suffering to me to be a witness in court. . . . . If it is not asking too great a favor, I should be greatly obliged if you would inform me what you decide, as apprehension of the coming exertion would prevent the rest which I require doing me much good." Needless to add that I at once wrote to Mr. Darwin that we would not call him, but his gentle courtesy has always remained a pleasant memory to me. Another kind act was that of the famous publisher, Mr. H. G. Bohn, who volunteered himself as a witness, and drew attention to the fact that every publisher of serious literature was imperilled by the attempt to establish a police censorship.

The trial commenced on June 18th, in the Court of Queen's Bench at Westminster, before the Lord Chief Justice of England and a special jury. Sir Hardinge Giffard, the Solicitor-General of the Tory Government, Mr. Douglas Straight, and Mr. Mead, were the prosecuting counsel. The special jury consisted of the following:

Alfred Upward, Augustus Voelcker, Captain Alfred Henry Waldy, Thomas Richard Walker, Robert Wallace, Edmund Waller, Arthur Walter, Charles Alfred Walter, John Ward, Arthur Warre; the two talesmen, who were afterwards added to make up the number, were George Skinner and Charles Wilson.

The Solicitor-General made a bitter and violent speech, full of party hate and malice, endeavoring to prejudice the jury against the work by picking out bits of medical detail and making profuse apologies for reading them, and shuddering and casting up his eyes with all the skill of a finished actor. For a man accustomed to Old Bailey practice he was really marvellously easily shocked; a simple physiological fact brought him to the verge of tears, while the statement that people often had too large families covered him with such modest confusion that he found it hard to continue his address. It fell to my lot to open the defence, and to put the general line of argument by which we justified the publication; Mr. Bradlaugh dealt with the defence of the book as a medical work—until the Lord Chief Justice suggested that there was no "redundancy of details, or anything more than it is necessary for a medical man to know"—and strongly urged that the knowledge given by the pamphlet was absolutely necessary for the poor. We called as witnesses for the defence Miss Alice Vickery—the first lady who passed the examination of the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, and who has since passed the examinations qualifying her to act as a physician—Dr. Charles Drysdale, and Mr. H. G. Bohn. Dr. Drysdale bore witness to the medical value of the pamphlet, stating that "considering it was written forty years ago . . . . the writer must have been a profound student of physiology, and far advanced in the medical science of his time". "I have always considered it an excellent treatise, and I have found among my professional brethren that they have had nothing to say against it." Mr. Bohn bore witness that he had published books which "entirely covered your book, and gave a great deal more." Mr. Bradlaugh and myself then severally summed up our case, and the Solicitor-General made a speech for the prosecution very much of the character of his first one, doing all he could to inflame the minds of the jury against us. The Lord Chief Justice, to quote

a morning paper, "summed up strongly for an acquittal". He said that "a more ill-advised and more injudicious proceeding in the way of a prosecution was probably never brought into a Court of Justice". He described us as "two enthusiasts, who have been actuated by the desire to do good in a particular department of Society". He bade the jury be careful "not to abridge the full and free right of public discussion, and the expression of public and private opinion on matters which are interesting to all, and materially affect the welfare of society." Then came an admirable statement of the law of population, and of his own view of the scope of the book which I present in full as our best justification.

"The author, Doctor Knowlton, professes to deal with the subject of population. Now, a century ago a great and important question of political economy was brought to the attention of the scientific and thinking world by a man whose name everybody is acquainted with, namely, Malthus. He started for the first time a theory which astonished the world, though it is now accepted as an irrefragable truth, and has since been adopted by economist after economist. It is that population has a strong and marked tendency to increase faster than the means of subsistence afforded by the earth, or that the skill and industry of man can produce for the support of life. The consequence is that the population of a country necessarily includes a vast number of persons upon whom poverty presses with a heavy and sad hand. It is true that the effects of overpopulation are checked to a certain extent by those powerful agencies which have been at work since the beginning of the world. Great pestilences, famines, and wars have constantly swept away thousands from the face of the earth, who otherwise must have contributed to swell the numbers of mankind. The effect, however, of this tendency to increase faster than the means of subsistence, leads to still more serious evils amongst the poorer classes of society. It necessarily lowers the price of labor by reason of the supply exceeding the demand. It increases the dearth of provisions by making the demand greater than the supply, and produces direful consequences to a large class of persons who labor under the evils, physical and moral, of poverty. You find it, as described by a witness called yesterday, in the overcrowding of our cities and country villages, and the necessarily demoralising effects resulting from that overcrowding. You have heard of the way in which women—I mean child-bearing women—are destroyed by being obliged to submit to the necessities of their position before they are fully restored from the effects of child-birth, and the effects thus

produced upon the children by disease and early death. That these are evils—evils which, if they could be prevented, it would be the first business of human charity to prevent—there cannot be any doubt. That the evils of over-population are real, and not imaginary, no one acquainted with the state of society in the present day can possibly deny. Malthus suggested, years ago, and his suggestion has been supported by economists since his time, that the only possible way of keeping down population was by retarding marriage to as late a period as possible, the argument being that the fewer the marriages the fewer would be the people. But another class of theorists say that that remedy is bad, and possibly worse than the disease, because, although you might delay marriage, you cannot restrain those instincts which are implanted in human nature, and people will have the gratification and satisfaction of passions powerfully implanted, if not in one way, in some other way. So you have the evils of prostitution substituted for the evils of over-population. Now, what says Dr. Knowlton? There being this choice of evils—there being this unquestioned evil of over-population which exists in a great part of the civilised world—is the remedy proposed by Malthus so doubtful that probably it would lead to greater evils than the one which it is intended to remedy? Dr. Knowlton suggests—and here we come to the critical point of this inquiry—he suggests that, instead of marriage being postponed, it shall be hastened. He suggests that marriage shall take place in the hey-day of life, when the passions are at their highest, and that the evils of over-population shall be remedied by persons, after they have married, having recourse to artificial means to prevent the procreation of a numerous offspring, and the consequent evils, especially to the poorer classes, which the production of a too numerous offspring is certain to bring about. Now, gentlemen, that is the scope of the book. With a view to make those to whom these remedies are suggested understand, appreciate, and be capable of applying them, he enters into details as to the physiological circumstances connected with the procreation of the species. The Solicitor-General says—and that was the first proposition with which he started—that the whole of this is a delusion and a sham. When Knowlton says that he wishes that marriage should take place as early as possible—marriage being the most sacred and holy of all human relations—he means nothing of the kind, but means and suggests, in the sacred name of marriage, illicit intercourse between the sexes, or a kind of prostitution. Now, gentlemen, whatever may be your opinion about the propositions contained in this work, when you come to weigh carefully the views of this undoubted physician and would-be philosopher, I think you will agree with me that to say that he meant to depreciate

marriage for the sake of prostitution, and that all he says about marriage is only a disguise, and intended to impress upon the mind sentiments of an entirely different character for the gratification of passion, otherwise than by marriage, is a most unjust accusation. (Applause in court.) I must say that I believe that every word he says about marriage being a desirable institution, and every word he says with reference to the enjoyments and happiness it engenders, is said as honestly and truly as anything probably ever uttered by any man. I can only believe that when the Solicitor-General made that statement he had not half studied the book. But I pass that by. I come to the plain issue before you. Knowlton goes into physiological details connected with the functions of the generation and procreation of children. The principles of this pamphlet, with its details, are to be found in greater abundance and distinctness in numerous works to which your attention has been directed, and, having these details before you, you must judge for yourselves whether there is anything in them which is calculated to excite the passions of man and debase the public morals. If so, every medical work is open to the same imputation."

The Lord Chief Justice then dealt with the question whether conjugal prudence was in itself immoral, and pointed out to the jury that the decision of this very serious question was in their hands:

"A man and woman may say, 'We have more children than we can supply with the common necessaries of life: what are we to do?' Let us have recourse to this contrivance.' Then, gentlemen, you should consider whether that particular course of proceeding is inconsistent with morality, whether it would have a tendency to degrade and deprave the man or woman. The Solicitor-General, while doubtless admitting the evils and mischiefs of excessive population, argues that the checks proposed are demoralising in their effects, and that it is better to bear the ills we have than have recourse to remedies having such demoralising results. These are questions for you, twelve thinking men, probably husbands and fathers of families, to consider and determine. That the defendants honestly believe that the evils that this work would remedy, arising from overpopulation and poverty, are so great that these checks may be resorted to as a remedy for the evils, and as bettering the condition of humanity, although there might be things to be avoided, if it were possible to avoid them, and yet remedy the evils which they are to prevent—that such is the honest opinion of the defendants, we, who have read the book, and who have heard what they have said, must do them the justice of believing. I agree with the Solicitor-General if, with a view to what is admitted to be a great good, they propose something

to the world, and circulate it especially among the poorer classes, if they propose something inconsistent with public morals, and tending to destroy the domestic purity of women, that it is not because they do not see the evils of the latter, while they see the evils of the former, that they must escape; if so, they must abide the consequences of their actions, whatever may have been their motive. They say, 'We are entitled to submit to the consideration of the thinking portion of mankind the remedies which we propose for these evils. We have come forward to challenge the inquiry whether this is a book which we are entitled to publish.' They do it fairly, I must say, and in a very straightforward manner they come to demand the judgment of the proper tribunal. You must decide that with a due regard and reference to the law, and with an honest and determined desire to maintain the morals of mankind. But, on the other hand, you must carefully consider what is due to public discussion, and with an anxious desire not, from any prejudiced view of this subject, to stifle what may be a subject of legitimate inquiry. But there is another view of this subject, that Knowlton intended to reconcile with marriage the prevention of over-population. Upon the perusal of this work, I cannot bring myself to doubt that he honestly believed that the remedies he proposed were less evils than even celibacy or over-population on the one hand, or the prevention of marriage on the other hand—in that honesty of intention I entirely concur. But whether, in his desire to reconcile marriage with a check on over-population, he did not overlook one very important consideration connected with that part of society which should abuse it, is another and a very serious consideration."

When the jury retired there was but one opinion in court, namely, that we had won our case. But they were absent for an hour and thirty-five minutes, and we learned afterwards that several were anxious to convict, not so much because of the book as because we were Freethinkers. At last they agreed to a compromise, and the verdict delivered was: "We are unanimously of opinion that the book in question is calculated to deprave public morals, but at the same time we entirely exonerate the defendants from any corrupt motives in publishing it."

The Lord Chief Justice looked troubled, and said gravely that he would have to direct them to return a verdict of guilty on such a finding. The foreman, who was bitterly hostile, jumped at the chance without consulting his colleagues, some of whom had turned to leave the box, and thus snatched a technical verdict of "guilty" against us. Mr. George Skinner, of 27, Great Chapel Gate, West-

minster, wrote to me on the following day to say that six of the jurymen did not consent to the verdict of "guilty", and that they had agreed that if the judge would not accept the verdict as handed in they would then retire again, and that they would never have given a verdict of guilty; but the stupid men had not the sense to speak out at the right time, and their foreman had his way. The Lord Chief Justice at once set us free to come up for judgment on that day week, June 28th—the trial had lasted till the 21st—and we went away on the same recognizances given before by Mr. Bradlaugh, an absolutely unprecedented courtesy to two technically "convicted prisoners".[1]

XVI.

The week which intervened between the verdict of the jury and the day on which we were ordered to appear in Court to receive sentence was spent by us in arranging all our affairs, and putting everything in train for our anticipated absence. One serious question had to be settled, but it did not need long consideration. What were we to do about the Knowlton pamphlet? We promptly decided to ignore the verdict and to continue the sale. Recognising that the fact of this continued sale would be brought up against us in Court and would probably seriously increase our sentence, we none the less considered that as we had commenced the fight we were bound to maintain it, and we went on with the sale as before.

On June 28th we attended the Court of Queen's Bench to receive judgment, the Lord Chief Justice and Mr. Justice Mellor being on the Bench. We moved to quash the indictment, on arrest of judgment, and for a new trial, the first on the ground that the indictment did not set out the words complained of. The judges were against us on this, but it is interesting to note that the Lord Chief Justice remarked that "the language of the book is not open to any

[1] A Report of the Trial can be obtained from the Freethought Publishing Company, price 6s. It contains an exact report of all that was said and done.

particular objection". I argued that the jury, having exonerated us from any corrupt motive, could not be regarded as having found us guilty on an indictment which charged us with a corrupt motive: the Lord Chief Justice held that "in the unnecessary and superfluous part of the indictment, there is no judgment against you", and refused to believe that anyone would be found afterwards so base as to accuse us of evil intent, because of the formal words of the indictment, the jury having acquitted us of any corrupt intention. The judge unfortunately imputed to others his own uprightness, and we have found many—among them Sir W. T. Charley, the present Common Sergeant—vile enough to declare what he thought impossible, that we were found guilty of wilfully corrupting the morals of the people. The judges decided against us on all the points raised, but it is due to them to say that in refusing to quash the indictment, as Mr. Bradlaugh asked, they were misled by the misrepresentation of an American case by Sir Hardinge Giffard, and, to quote the words of the Lord Chief Justice, they sheltered themselves "under the decisions of the American Courts, and left this matter to be carefully gone into by the Court of Error".

The question of sentence then arose, and two affidavits were put in, one by a reporter of the *Morning Advertiser*, named Lysaght. This individual published in the *Advertiser* a very garbled report of a meeting at the Hall of Science on the previous Sunday, evidently written to anger the Lord Chief Justice, and used by Sir Hardinge Giffard with the same object. In one thing, however, it was accurate, and that was in stating that we announced our intention to continue the sale of the book. On this arose an argument with the Lord Chief Justice; he pointed out that we did not deny that the circulation of the book was going on, and we assented that it was so. It was almost pathetic to see the judge, angry at our resolution, unwilling to sentence us, but determined to vindicate the law he administered. "The question is," he urged, "what is to be the future course of your conduct? The jury have acquitted you of any intention to deliberately violate the law; and that, although you did publish this book, which was a book that ought not to have been published, you were not conscious of the effect it might have, and had no intention to violate the law. That would induce the Court, if it saw

a ready submission on your part, to deal with the case in a very lenient way. The jury having found that it was a violation of the law, but with a good motive or through ignorance, the Court, in awarding punishment upon such a state of things, would, of course, be disposed to take a most indulgent view of the matter. But if the law has been openly set at defiance, the matter assumes a very different aspect, and it must be dealt with as a very grave and aggravated case." We could not, however, pledge ourselves to do anything more than stop the sale pending the appeal on the writ of error which we had resolved to go for. "Have you anything to say in mitigation?" was the judge's last appeal; but Mr. Bradlaugh answered: "I respectfully submit myself to the sentence of the Court"; and I: "I have nothing to say in mitigation of punishment".

The sentence and the reason for its heavy character have been so misrepresented, that I print here, from the short-hand report taken at the time, the account of what passed:—

"The LORD CHIEF JUSTICE, after having conferred for some minutes with Mr. Justice Mellor, said: The case has now assumed a character of very, very grave importance. We were prepared, if the defendants had announced openly in this Court that having acted in error as the jury found—of which finding I think they are entitled to the benefit—but still having been, after a fair and impartial trial, found by the jury guilty of doing of that which was an offence against the law, they were ready to submit to the law and to do everything in their power to prevent the further publication and circulation of a work which has been declared by the jury to be a work calculated to deprave public morals, we should have been prepared to discharge them on their own recognizances to be of good behavior in the future. But we cannot help seeing in what has been said and done pending this trial, and since the verdict of the jury was pronounced, that the defendants, instead of submitting themselves to the law, have set it at defiance by continuing to circulate this book. That being so I must say that that which before was an offence of a comparatively slight character—looking to what the jury have found in reference to the contention of the defendants—now assumes the form of a most grave and aggravated offence, and as such we must deal with it. The sentence is that you, Charles Bradlaugh, and you, Annie Besant, be imprisoned for the term of six calendar months; that you each pay a fine of £200 to the Queen; and that you enter

further into your own recognizances in a sum of £500 each to be of good behavior for the term of two years; and I tell you at the same time that you will not be of 'good behavior' and will be liable to forfeit that sum if you continue to publish this book. No persuasion or conviction on your part that you are doing that which is morally justifiable can possibly warrant you in violating the law or excuse you in doing so. No one is above the law; all owe obedience to the law from the highest to the lowest, and if you choose to set yourself at defiance against the law—to break it and defy it—you must expect to be dealt with accordingly. I am very sorry indeed that such should be the result, but it is owing to your being thus contumacious, notwithstanding that you have had a fair trial, and the verdict of a competent jury, which ought to have satisfied you that you ought to abstain from doing what has been clearly demonstated and shown to be wrong.

"Mr. BRADLAUGH: Would your lordship entertain an application to stay execution of the sentence?

"The LORD CHIEF JUSTICE: Certainly not. On consideration, if you will pledge yourselves unreservedly that there shall be no repetition of the publication of the book, at all events, until the Court of Appeal shall have decided contrary to the verdict of the jury and our judgment; if we can have that positive pledge, and you will enter into your recognizances that you will not avail yourselves of the liberty we extend to continue the publication of this book, which it is our bounden duty to suppress, or do our utmost to suppress, we may stay execution; but we can show no indulgence without such a pledge.

"Mr. BRADLAUGH: My lord, I meant to offer that pledge in the fullest and most unreserved sense, because, although I have my own view as to what is right, I also recognise that the law having pronounced sentence, that is quite another matter so far as I, as a citizen, am concerned. I do not wish to ask your lordship for a favor without yielding to the Court during the time that I take advantage of its indulgence.

"The LORD CHIEF JUSTICE: I wish you had taken this position sooner.

"Mr. BRADLAUGH: If the sentence goes against us, it is another matter; but if you should consent to give us time for the argument of this writ of error, we would bind ourselves during that time. I should not like your lordship to be induced to grant this request on the understanding that in the event of the ultimate decision being against me I should feel bound by that pledge.

"The LORD CHIEF JUSTICE: I must do you the justice to say that throughout the whole of this battle your conduct has been straightforward since you took it up.

"Mr. BRADLAUGH: I would not like your lordship to think that, in the event of the ultimate decision being against us, there was any sort of pledge. I simply meant that the law having pronounced against us, if your lordship gives us the indulgence of fighting it in the higher Court, no sort of direct or indirect advantage shall be taken of the indulgence.

"The LORD CHIEF JUSTICE: You will not continue the publication?

"Mr. BRADLAUGH: Not only will I stop the circulation of the book myself, but I will do all in my power to prevent other people circulating it.

"The LORD CHIEF JUSTICE: Then you can be discharged on your own recognizances for £100, 'to be of good behavior,' which you will understand to mean, that you will desist from the publication of this work until your appeal shall have been heard, and will engage to prosecute the appeal without delay.

"Mr. BRADLAUGH: Certainly; until the present, I have undoubtedly circulated the book. Although there is a blunder in the affidavits I do not disguise the matter of fact. I shall immediately put the thing under my own control, and I will at once lock up every copy in existence, and will not circulate another copy until the appeal is decided.

"Mr. JUSTICE MELLOR: It must be that you will really, to the best of your ability, prevent the circulation of this book until this matter has been determined.

"The LORD CHIEF JUSTICE: And what Mr. Bradlaugh says, I understand that you, Mrs. Besant, also assent to?

"Mrs. BESANT: Yes: that is my pledge until the writ of error has been decided. I do not want to give a pledge which you may think was not given honestly. I will give my pledge, but it must be understood that the promise goes no further than that decision.

"Mr. JUSTICE MELLOR: You will abstain yourself from circulating the book, and, so far as you can, suppress its circulation?

"Mr. BRADLAUGH: Every copy that is unsold shall be at once put under lock and key until the decision of the case.

"The SOLICITOR-GENERAL: My lord, I think there should be no misunderstanding upon this; I understand that the defendants have undertaken that during the pendency of the appeal this book shall not be circulated at all. But if the decision should be against them they are under no pledge not to publish.

"Mr. BRADLAUGH: I hope your lordship will not ask us what we shall do in future.

"The LORD CHIEF JUSTICE: We have meted out the amount of punishment upon the assumption—there being no assertion to the contrary, but rather an admission—that they do intend to set the law at defiance. If we had understood that they

were prepared to submit themselves to the law, we should have been disposed to deal with them in the most indulgent manner; but as we understood that they did not intend this, we have meted out to them such a punishment as we hope, when undergone, will have a deterrent effect upon them, and may prevent other people offending in like manner. We have nothing to do with what may happen after the defendants obtain a judgment in their favor, if they do so, or after the sentence is carried out, if they do not. Our sentence is passed, and it will stand, subject only to this, that we stay execution until a writ of error may be disposed of, the defendants giving the most unqualified and unreserved pledge that they will not allow another copy of the book to be sold.

"Mr. BRADLAUGH: Quite so, my lord; quite so."

We were then taken into custody, and went down to the Crown Office to get the form for the recognizances, the amount of which, £100, after such a sentence, was a fair proof of the view of the Court as to our good faith in the whole matter. As a married woman, I was unable to give recognizances, being only a chattel, not a person cognisable by law; the Court mercifully ignored this—or I should have had to go to prison—and accepted Mr. Bradlaugh's sole recognizance as covering us both. It further inserted in the sentence that we were "to be placed in the First Class of Misdemeanants", but as the sentence was never executed, we did not profit by this alleviation.

The rest of the story of the Knowlton pamphlet is soon told. We appeared in the Court of Appeal on January 29th, 30th, and 31st, 1878. Mr. Bradlaugh argued the case, I only making a brief speech, and on February 12th the Court, composed of Lords Justices Bramwell, Brett, and Cotton, gave judgment in our favor and quashed the indictment. Thus we triumphed all along the line; the jury acquitted us of all evil motive, and left us morally unstained; the Court of Appeal quashed the indictment, and set us legally free. None the less have the ignorant, the malicious, and the brutal, used this trial and sentence against us as a proof of moral obliquity, and have branded us as "vendors of obscene books" on this sole ground.

With the decision of the Court of Appeal our pledge not to sell the Knowlton pamphlet came to an end, and we at once recommenced the sale. The determination we came to was announced in the *National Reformer* of March 3rd,

and I reprint here the statement I wrote at the time in Mr. Bradlaugh's name as well as my own.

"THE PLAN OF THE CAMPAIGN.

"THE first pitched battle of the new campaign for the Liberty of the Press has, as all our readers know, ended in the entire defeat of the attacking army, and in the recapture of the position originally lost. There is no conviction—of ours—registered against the Knowlton Pamphlet, the whole of the proceedings having been swept away; and the prosecutors are left with a large sum out of pocket, and no one any the worse for all their efforts. The banker's account of the unknown prosecutor shows a long and melancholy catalogue of expenses, and there is no glory and no success to balance them on the other side of the ledger. On the contrary, our prosecutors have advertised the attacked pamphlet, and circulated it by thousands and by hundreds of thousands; they have caused it to be reprinted in Holland and in America, and have spread it over India, Australia, New Zealand, and the whole continent of Europe; they have caused the Population Question to be discussed, both at home and abroad, in the press and in the public meeting; they have crammed the largest halls in England and Scotland to listen to the preaching of Malthusianism; they have induced the publication of a modern pamphlet on the question which is selling by thousands; they have enormously increased the popularity of the defendants, and made new friends for them in every class of society; in the end, Knowlton is being circulated as vigorously as ever, and since the case was decided more copies have been sold than would have been disposed of in ten years at the old rate of sale. Truly, our prosecutors must feel delighted at the results of their labors.

"So much for the past: what as to the future? Some, fancying we should act as they themselves would do under the like circumstances, dream that we shall now give way. We have not the smallest intention of doing anything of the kind. We said, nearly a year ago, that so long as Knowlton was prosecuted we should persist in selling him; we repeated the same determination in Court, and received for it a heavy sentence; we repeat the same to-day, in spite of the injudicious threat of Lord Justice Brett. Before we went up for judgment in the Court of Appeal we had made all preparations for the renewal of the struggle; parcels were ready to be forwarded to friends who had volunteered to sell in various towns; if we had gone to jail from the Court these would at once have been sent; as we won our case, they were sent just the same. On the following day orders were given to tell any wholesale agents who inquired that the book was again on sale, and the bills at 28, Stonecutter Street, announcing the suspension of the sale, were

taken down; from that day forward all orders received have been punctually attended to, and the sale has been both rapid and steady. There is, however, one difference between the sale of Knowlton and that of our other literature: Knowlton is not sold across the counter at Stonecutter Street. When we were arrested in April 1877, we stopped the sale across counter, and we do not, at present, intend to recommence it. Our reason is very simple. The sale across counter does not, in any fashion, cause us any additional risk; the danger of it falls entirely on Mr. Ramsey and on Mr. and Mrs. Norrish; we fail to see that there is any courage in running other people into danger, and we prefer, therefore, to take the risk on ourselves. We do not intend to go down again and personally sell behind the counter; we thought it right to challenge a prosecution once, but, having done so, we intend now to go quietly on our ordinary way of business, and wait for any attack that may come.

"Meanwhile, we are not only selling the 'Fruits of Philosophy', but we also are striving to gain the legal right to do so. In the appeal from Mr. Vaughan's decision Mr. Bradlaugh again raises all the disputed questions, and that appeal will be argued as persistently as was the one just decided in our favor. We are also making efforts to obtain an alteration of the law of libel, and we hope soon to be able to announce the exact terms of the proposed Bill.

"My own pamphlet, on 'The Law of Population', is another effort in the same direction. At our trial the Lord Chief Justice said, that it was the advocacy of the preventive checks which was the assailable part of Knowlton; that advocacy is strongly and clearly to be found in the new pamphlet, together with facts useful to mothers, as to the physical injury caused by over-rapid child-bearing, which Knowlton did not give. The pamphlet has the advantage of being written fifty years later than the 'Fruits of Philosophy', and is more suitable, therefore, for circulation at the present day. We hope that it may gradually replace Knowlon as a manual for the poor. While we shall continue to print and sell Knowlton as long as any attempt is made to suppress it, we hope that the more modern pamphlet may gradually supersede the old one.

"If another prosecution should be instituted against us, our prosecutors would have a far harder task before them than they had last time. In the first place, they would be compelled to state, clearly and definitely, what it is to which they object; and we should, therefore, be able to bring our whole strength to bear on the assailed point. In the second place, they would have to find a jury who would be ready to convict, and after the full discussion of the question which has taken place the finding of such a jury would be by no means an easy thing to do. Lastly, they must be quite sure not to make any legal

blunders, for they may be sure that such sins will find them out. Perhaps, on the whole, they had better leave us alone.

"I believe that our readers will be glad to have this statement of our action, and this assurance that we feel as certain of winning the battle of a Free Press as when we began it a year ago, and that our determination is as unwavering as when Serjeant Outram arrested us in the spring of last year.—ANNIE BESANT."

Several purchases were made from us by detectives, and we were more than once threatened with prosecution. At last evidence for a new prosecution was laid before the Home Office, and the Government declined to institute fresh proceedings or to have anything more to do with the matter. The battle was won. As soon as we were informed of this decision, we decided to sell only the copies we had in stock, and not to further reprint the pamphlet. Out-of-date as was much of its physiology, it was defended as a symbol, not for its intrinsic worth. We issued a circular stating that—

"The Knowlton pamphlet is now entirely out of print, and, 185,000 having been printed, the Freethought Publishing Company do not intend to continue the publication, which has never at any time been advertised by them except on the original issue to test the question. 'The Law of Population', price 6d., post free 8d., has been specially written by Mrs. Besant to supersede the Knowlton pamphlet."

Thus ended a prolonged resistance to an unfair attempt to stifle discussion, and, much as I have suffered in consequence of the part I took in that fight, I have never once regretted that battle for the saving of the poor.

In July, 1877, a side-quarrel on the pamphlet begun which lasted until December 3rd, 1878, and was fought through court after court right out to a successful issue. We had avoided a seizure warrant by removing all our stock from 28, Stonecutter Street, but 657 of the pamphlets had been seized at Mr. Truelove's, in Holborn, and that gentleman was also proceeded against for selling the work. The summons for selling was withdrawn, and Mr. Bradlaugh succeeded in having his name and mine inserted as owners of the books in the summons for their destruction. The books remained in the custody of the magistrate until after the decision of the Court of Queen's Bench, and on February 12th, 1878, Mr. Bradlaugh appeared before Mr.

Vaughan at Bow Street, and claimed that the books should be restored to him. Mr. Collette, of the Vice Society, argued on the other hand that the books were obscene, and ought therefore to be destroyed. Mr. Vaughan reserved his decision, and asked for the Lord Chief Justice's summing-up in the Queen *v.* Bradlaugh and Besant. On February 19th he made an order for the destruction of the pamphlets, against which Mr. Bradlaugh appealed to the General Sessions on the following grounds:

"1st. That the said book is not an obscene book within the meaning of the 20th and 21st Victoria, cap. 83. 2nd. That the said book is a scientific treatise on the law of population and its connexion with poverty, and that there is nothing in the book which is not necessary and legitimate in the description of the question. 3rd. That the advocacy of non-life-destroying checks to population is not an offence either at common law or by statute, and that the manner in which that advocacy is raised in the said book, 'The Fruits of Philosophy', is not such as makes it an indictable offence. 4th. That the discussion and recommendation of checks to over-population after marriage is perfectly lawful, and that there is in the advocacy and recommendations contained in the book 'Fruits of Philosophy' nothing that is prurient or calculated to inflame the passions. 5th. That the physiological information in the said book is such as is absolutely necessary for understanding the subjects treated, and such information is more fully given in Carpenter's treatises on Physiology, and Kirke's 'Handbook of Physiology', which later works are used for the instruction of the young under Government sanction. 6th. That the whole of the physiological information contained in the said book, 'The Fruits of Philosophy', has been published uninterruptedly for fifty years, and still is published in dear books, and that the publication of such information in a cheap form cannot constitute an offence."

After a long argument before Mr. Edlin and a number of other Middlesex magistrates, the Bench affirmed Mr. Vaughan's order, whereupon Mr. Bradlaugh promptly obtained from the Lord Chief Justice and Mr. Justice Mellor a writ of *certiorari*, removing their order to the Queen's Bench Division of the High Court of Justice with a view to quashing it. The matter was not argued until the following November, on the 9th of which month it came on before Mr. Justice Mellor and Mr. Justice Field. The Court decided in Mr. Bradlaugh's favor and

granted a rule quashing Mr. Vaughan's order, and with this fell the order of the Middlesex magistrates. The next thing was to recover the pamphlets thus rescued from destruction, and on December 3rd Mr. Bradlaugh appeared before Mr. Vaughan at Bow Street in support of a summons against Mr. Henry Wood, a police inspector, for detaining 657 copies of the "Fruits of Philosophy". After a long argument Mr. Vaughan ordered the pamphlets to be given up to him, and he carried them off in triumph, there and then, on a cab. We labelled the rescued pamphlets and sold every one of them, in mocking defiance of the Vice Society.

The circulation of literature advocating prudential checks to population was not stopped during the temporary suspension of the sale of the Knowlton pamphlet between June, 1877, and February, 1878. In October, 1877, I commenced in the *National Reformer* the publication of a pamphlet entitled: "The Law of Population, its consequences, and its bearing upon human conduct and morals". This little book included a statement of the law, evidence of the serious suffering among the poor caused by overlarge families, and a clear statement of the checks proposed, with arguments in their favor. The medical parts were omitted in the *National Reformer* articles, and the pamphlet was published complete early in November, at the price of sixpence—the same as Knowlton's—the first edition consisting of 5,000 copies. A second edition of 5,000 was issued in December, but all the succeeding editions were of 10,000 copies each. The pamphlet is now in its ninetieth thousand, and has gone all over the civilised world. It has been translated into Swedish, Danish, Dutch, French, German, and Italian, and 110,000 copies have been sold of an American reprint. On the whole, the prosecution of 1877 did not do much in stopping the circulation of literature on the Population Question.

The "Law" has been several times threatened with prosecution, and the initial steps have been taken, but the stage of issuing a warrant for its seizure has never yet been reached. Twice I have had the stock removed to avoid seizure, but on each occasion the heart of the prosecutors has failed them, and the little book has carried its message of mercy unspeeded by the advertisement of prosecution.

The struggle on the right to discuss the prudential restraint of population did not, however, conclude without a martyr. Mr. Edward Truelove, alluded to above, was prosecuted for selling a treatise by Robert Dale Owen on "Moral Physiology", and a pamphlet entitled, "Individual, Family, and National Poverty". He was tried on February 1st, 1878, before the Lord Chief Justice in the Court of Queen's Bench, and was most ably defended by Professor W. A. Hunter. The jury spent two hours in considering their verdict, and then returned into Court and stated that they were unable to agree. The majority of the jury were ready to convict, if they felt sure that Mr. Truelove would not be punished, but one of them boldly declared in Court: "As to the book, it is written in plain language for plain people, and I think that many more persons ought to know what the contents of the book are". The jury was discharged, in consequence of this one man's courage, but Mr. Truelove's persecutors—the wretched Vice Society—were determined not to let their victim free. They proceeded to trial a second time, and wisely endeavored to secure a special jury, feeling that as prudential restraint would raise wages by limiting the supply of labor, they would be more likely to obtain a verdict from a jury of "gentlemen" than from one composed of workers. This attempt was circumvented by Mr. Truelove's legal advisers, who let a *procedendo* go which sent back the trial to the Old Bailey. The second trial was held on May 16th at the Central Criminal Court before Baron Pollock and a common jury, Professor Hunter and Mr. J. M. Davidson appearing for the defence. The jury convicted, and the brave old man, sixty-eight years of age, was condemned to four months' imprisonment and £50 fine for selling a pamphlet which had been sold unchallenged, during a period of forty-five years, by James Watson, George Jacob Holyoake, Austin Holyoake, and Charles Watts. Mr. Grain, the counsel employed by the Vice Society, most unfairly used against Mr. Truelove my "Law of Population", a pamphlet which contained, Baron Pollock said, "the head and front of the offence in the other [the Knowlton] case". I find an indignant protest against this odious unfairness in the *National Reformer* for May 19th: "'My Law of Population' was used against Mr. Truelove as an aggravation of

his offence; passing over the utter meanness—worthy only of Collette—of using against a prisoner a book whose author has never been attacked for writing it—does Mr. Collette, or do the authorities, imagine that the severity shown to Mr. Truelove will in any fashion deter me from continuing the Malthusian propaganda? Let me here assure them, one and all, that it will do nothing of the kind; I shall continue to sell the 'Law of Population' and to advocate scientific checks to population, just as though Mr. Collette and his Vice Society were all dead and buried. In commonest justice they are bound to prosecute me, and if they get, and keep, a verdict against me, and succeed in sending me to prison, they will only make people more anxious to read my book, and make me more personally powerful as a teacher of the views which they attack."

A persistent attempt was made to obtain a writ of error in Mr. Truelove's case, but the Tory Attorney-General, Sir John Holker, refused it, although the ground on which it was asked was one of the grounds on which a similar writ had been granted to Mr. Bradlaugh and myself. Mr. Truelove was therefore compelled to suffer his sentence, but memorials, signed by 11,000 persons, asking for his release, were sent to the Home Secretary from every part of the country, and a crowded meeting in St. James' Hall, London, demanded his liberation with only six dissentients. The whole agitation did not shorten Mr. Truelove's sentence by a single day, and he was not released from Coldbath Fields' Prison until September 5th. On the 12th of the same month the Hall of Science was crowded with enthusiastic friends, who assembled to do him honor, and he was presented with a beautifully-illuminated address and a purse containing £177 (subsequent subscriptions raised the amount to £197 16s. 6d.).

It is scarcely necessary to say that one of the results of the prosecution was a great agitation throughout the country, and a wide popularisation of Malthusian views. Some huge demonstrations were held in favor of free discussion; on one occasion the Free Trade Hall, Manchester, was crowded to the doors; on another the Star Music Hall, Bradford, was crammed in every corner; on another the Town Hall, Birmingham, had not a seat or a bit of standing-room unoccupied. Wherever we went, separately or

together, it was the same story, and not only were Malthusian lectures eagerly attended, and Malthusian literature eagerly bought, but curiosity brought many to listen to our Radical and Freethought lectures, and thousands heard for the first time what Secularism really meant.

The press, both London and provincial, agreed in branding the prosecution as foolish, and it was widely remarked that it resulted only in the wider circulation of the indicted book, and the increased popularity of those who had stood for the right of publication. The furious attacks since made upon us have been made chiefly by those who differ from us in theological creed, and who have found a misrepresentation of our prosecution served them as a convenient weapon of attack. During the last few years public opinion has been gradually coming round to our side, in consequence of the pressure of poverty resulting from widespread depression of trade, and during the sensation caused in 1884 by "The Bitter Cry of Outcast London", many writers in the *Daily News*—notably Mr. G. R. Sims—boldly alleged that the distress was to a great extent due to the large families of the poor, and mentioned that we had been prosecuted for giving the very knowledge which would bring salvation to the sufferers in our great cities.

Among the useful results of the prosecution was the establishment of the Malthusian League, "to agitate for the abolition of all penalties on the public discussion of the population question", and "to spread among the people, by all practicable means, a knowledge of the law of population, of its consequences, and of its bearing upon human conduct and morals". The first general meeting of the League was held at the Hall of Science on July 26th, 1877, and a council of twenty persons was elected, and this Council on August 2nd elected Dr. C. R. Drysdale, M.D. President, Mr. Swaagman Treasurer, Mrs. Besant Secretary, Mr. Shearer Assistant Secretary, and Mr. Hember Financial Secretary. Since 1877 the League, under the same indefatigable president, has worked hard to carry out its objects; it has issued a large number of leaflets and tracts; it supports a monthly journal, the *Malthusian*; numerous lectures have been delivered under its auspices in all parts of the country; and it has now a medical branch, into which none but duly qualified medical men

and women are admitted, with members in all European countries.

Another result of the prosecution was the accession of "D." to the staff of the *National Reformer*. This able and thoughtful writer came forward and joined our ranks as soon as he heard of the attack on us, and he further volunteered to conduct the journal during our imprisonment. From that time to this—a period of eight years—articles from his pen have appeared in our columns week by week, and during all that time not one solitary difficulty has arisen between editors and contributor. In public a trustworthy colleague, in private a warm and sincere friend, "D." has proved an unmixed benefit bestowed upon us by the prosecution.

Nor was "D." the only friend brought to us by our foes. I cannot ever think of that time without remembering that the prosecution brought me first into close intimacy with Mrs. Annie Parris—the wife of Mr. Touzeau Parris, the Secretary of the Defence Committee throughout all the fight—a lady who, during that long struggle, and during the, for me, far worse struggle that succeeded it, over the custody of my daughter, proved to me the most loving and sisterly of friends. One or two other friendships which will, I hope, last my life, date from that same time of strife and anxiety.

The amount of money subscribed by the public during the Knowlton and succeeding prosecutions gives some idea of the interest felt in the struggle. The Defence Fund Committee in March, 1878, presented a balance-sheet, showing subscriptions amounting to £1,292 5s. 4d., and total expenditure in the Queen *v.* Bradlaugh and Besant, the Queen *v.* Truelove, and the appeal against Mr. Vaughan's order (the last two up to date) of £1,274 10s. This account was then closed and the balance of £17 15s. 4d. passed on to a new Fund for the defence of Mr. Truelove, the carrying on of the appeal against the destruction of the Knowlton pamphlet, and the bearing of the costs incident on the petition lodged against myself. In July this new fund had reached £196 16s. 7d., and after paying the remainder of the costs in Mr. Truelove case, a balance of £26 15s. 2d. was carried on. This again rose to £247 15s. 2½d., and the fund bore the expenses of Mr. Bradlaugh's successful appeal on the Knowlton pamphlet, the

petition and subsequent proceedings in which I was concerned in the Court of Chancery, and an appeal on Mr. Truelove's behalf, unfortunately unsuccessful, against an order for the destruction of the Dale Owen pamphlet. This last decision was given on February 21st, 1880, and on this the Defence Fund was closed. On Mr. Truelove's release, as mentioned above, a testimonial to the amount of £197 16s. 6d. was presented to him, and after the close of the struggle some anonymous friend sent to me personally £200 as "thanks for the courage and ability shown". In addition to all this, the Malthusian League received no less than £455 11s. 9d. during the first year of its life, and started on its second year with a balance in hand of £77 5s. 8d.

The propaganda of Freethought was not forgotten while this Malthusian quarrel was raging, and in August 1877 the Freethought Publishing Company issued the first English edition of lectures by Colonel Robert Ingersoll, the eminent Freethought advocate of the United States. Since that time various other publishers have circulated thousands of his lectures, but it has always been to me a matter of satisfaction that we were the first to popularise the eloquent American in England. The ruling of the Lord Chief Justice that a book written with pure intention and meant to convey useful knowledge might yet be obscene, drew from me a pamphlet entitled, "Is the Bible Indictable?", in which I showed that the Bible came clearly within the judge's ruling. This turning of the tables on our persecutors caused considerable sensation at the time, and the pamphlet had, and still has, a very wide circulation. It is needless to add that the Sunday Freethought lectures were carried on despite the legal toils of the week, and, as said above, the large audiences attracted by the prosecution gave a splendid field for the inculcation of Freethought views. The National Secular Society consequently increased largely in membership, and a general impulse towards Freethought was manifest throughout the land.

The year 1878, so far as lecturing work was concerned, was largely taken up with a crusade against the Beaconsfield Government and in favor of peace. Lord Beaconsfield's hired roughs broke up several peace meetings during the winter, and on February 24th Mr. Bradlaugh

and Mr. Auberon Herbert, at the request of a meeting of working-class delegates, held in Hyde Park a "Demonstration in favor of Peace". The war party attacked the meeting and some sharp fighting took place, but a resolution "That this meeting declares in favor of peace" was carried despite them. A second meeting was called by the Working Men's Committee for March 10th, and a large force of medical students, roughs, militia-men, and "gentlemen", armed with loaded bludgeons, heavy pieces of iron, sticks with metal twisted round them, and various sharp-cutting weapons, went to Hyde Park to make a riot. The meeting was held and the resolution carried, but after it had dissolved there was some furious fighting. We learned afterwards that a large money reward had been offered to a band of roughs if they would disable Mr. Bradlaugh, and a violent organised attack was made on him. The stewards of the meeting carried short policemen's truncheons to defend themselves, and a number of these gathered round their chief and saved his life. He and his friends had to fight their way out of the park; a man, armed with some sharp instrument, struck at Mr. Bradlaugh from behind, and cut one side of his hat from top to brim; his truncheon was dinted with the jagged iron used as weapon; and his left arm, with which he guarded his head, was one mass of bruises from wrist to elbow. Lord Beaconsfield's friends very nearly succeeded in their attempt at murder, after all, for a dangerous attack of erysipelas set in, in the injured arm, and confined Mr. Bradlaugh to his room for sixteen days.

The provinces were far more strongly against war than was the capital, and in them we held many large and enthusiastic meetings in favor of peace. At Huddersfield the great Drill Hall was crammed for a lecture by me against war, and throughout Yorkshire and Lancashire scarcely a voice was ever raised in crowded meetings in defence of the Beaconsfieldian policy. A leaflet of mine, entitled "Rushing into War", was reprinted in various parts of the country, and was circulated in tens of thousands, and each Freethought leader worked with tongue and pen, on platform and in press, to turn the public feeling against war. The Freethought party may well take credit to itself for having been first in the field against the Tory policy, and for having successfully begun the work later carried

on by Mr. Gladstone in his Midlothian campaign. They did more than any other party in the country to create that force of public opinion which overthrew the Tory Government in 1880.

XVII.

The year 1878 was a dark one for me; it saw me deprived of my little daughter, despite the deed of separation by which the custody of the child had been assigned to me. The first notice that an application was to be made to the High Court of Chancery to deprive me of this custody reached me in January, 1878, while the decision on the Knowlton case was still pending, but the petition was not filed till April. The time was ill-chosen; Mabel had caught scarlet fever at a day-school she was attending, and for some days was dangerously ill. The fact of her illness was communicated to her father, and while the child was lying ill in bed, and I had cancelled all engagements so that I might not leave her side, I received a copy of the petition to deprive me of her custody. This document alleged as grounds for taking away the child:

"The said Annie Besant is, by addresses, lectures, and writings, endeavoring to propagate the principles of Atheism, and has published a book intituled: 'The Gospel of Atheism'. She has also associated herself with an infidel lecturer and author, named Charles Bradlaugh, in giving lectures and in publishing books and pamphlets, whereby the truth of the Christian religion is impeached, and disbelief in all religion is inculcated.

"The said Annie Besant has also, in conjunction with the said Charles Bradlaugh, published an indecent and obscene pamphlet called 'The Fruits of Philosophy'.

'The said pamphlet has recently been the subject of legal proceedings, in the course of which the said Annie Besant publicly justified its contents and publication, and stated, or inferred, that in her belief it would be right to teach young children the physiological facts contained in the said pamphlet. [This was a deliberate falsehood: I had never stated or inferred anything of the kind.] The said Annie Besant has also edited and published a pamphlet intituled 'The Law of Population; its consequences, and its bearing upon human conduct and

morals', to which book or pamphlet your petitioners crave leave to refer."

The petition was unfortunately heard before the Master of the Rolls, Sir George Jessel, a man animated by the old spirit of Hebrew bigotry, and who had superadded to this the coarse time-serving morality of "a man of the world", sceptical of all sincerity, and contemptuous of all self-devotion to a cause that did not pay, as of a weakness by which he was himself singularly unassailable. The treatment I received at his hands on my first appearance in Court told me what I had to expect. After my previous experience of the courtesy of English judges, I was startled to hear a harsh, loud voice exclaim, in answer to a statement from Mr. Ince, Q.C., that I appeared in person:

"Appear in person? A lady appear in person? Never heard of such a thing! Does the lady really appear in person?"

After a variety of similar remarks, delivered in the most grating tones and with the roughest manner, Sir George Jessel tried to attain his object by browbeating me directly.

"Is this the lady?"

"I am the respondent to the petition, my lord—Mrs. Besant."

"Then I advise you, Mrs. Besant, to employ counsel to represent you, if you can afford it, and I suppose you can."

"With all submission to your lordship, I am afraid I must claim my right of arguing my case in person."

"You will do so if you please, of course, but I think you had much better appear by counsel. I give you notice that, if you do not, you must not expect to be shown any consideration. You will not be heard by me at any greater length than the case requires, nor allowed to go into irrelevant matter, as persons who argue their own cases generally do."

"I trust I shall not do so, my lord; but in any case I shall be arguing under your lordship's complete control."

This encouraging beginning may be taken as a sample of the case. Mr. Ince, the counsel on the other side, was constantly practising in the Rolls' Court, knew all the judge's peculiarities, how to flatter and humor him on the one hand, and how to irritate him against his opponent on the other. Nor was Mr. Ince above using his influence with the Master of the Rolls to obtain an unfair advantage, knowing that whatever he said would be believed against

any contradiction of mine: thus he tried to obtain costs against me on the ground that the public helped me, whereas his client received no subscriptions in aid of his suit; yet as a matter of fact subscriptions had been collected for his client, and the Bishop of Lincoln, and many of the principal clergy and churchmen of the diocese had contributed liberally towards the persecution of the Atheist.

Mr. Ince and Mr. Bardswell argued that my Atheism and Malthusianism made me an unfit guardian for my child; Mr. Ince declared that Mabel, educated by me, would "be helpless for good in this world", and "hopeless for good hereafter"; outcast in this life and damned in the next; Mr. Bardswell implored the Judge to consider that my custody of her "would be detrimental to the future prospects of the child in society, to say nothing of her eternal prospects". I could have laughed, had not the matter been so terribly serious, at the mixture of Mrs. Grundy, marriage-establishment, and hell, presented as an argument for robbing a mother of her child. Once only did judge and counsel fall out; Mr. Bardswell had carelessly forgotten that Sir George Jessel was a Jew, and lifting eyes to heaven said:

"Your lordship, I think, will scarcely credit it, but Mrs. Besant says in a later affidavit that she took away the Testament from the child, because it contained coarse passages unfit for a child to read."

To his horror, Sir George Jessel considered there were "some passages which a child had better not read in the New Testament", and went on:

"It is not true to say there are no passages that are unfit for a child's reading, because I think there are a great many.

"Mr. BARDSWELL: I do not know of any passages that could fairly be called coarse.

"Sir G. JESSEL: I cannot quite assent to that."

With the exception of this little outburst of religious feeling against the book written by apostate Jews, Jewish judge and Christian counsel were united in their hatred of the Atheist. My argument fell on deaf ears; I distinctly admitted that I was an Atheist, that I had withdrawn the child from religious instruction at school, that I was the author of the "Gospel of Atheism", "The Fruits of Christianity", "The Freethinkers' Text Book, Part II.", and

"The Law of Population", produced against me: I claimed her custody on the ground that it was given me by the deed of separation executed by the father who was trying to set it aside, and that no pretence was made that the child was neglected, the admission being, on the contrary, that she was admirably cared for: I offered lastly, if she were taken from me, to devote £110 a-year to her maintenance and education, provided that she were placed in the hands of a third person, not of her father. Sir George Jessel decided against me, as he had clearly intended to do from the very outset, and as the part of his judgment affecting Freethinkers as parents is of continued interest I reprint it here.

"I am glad to say that, so far as I can see, Mrs. Besant has been kind and affectionate in her conduct and behavior towards the child, and has taken the greatest possible care of her so far as regards her physical welfare. I have no doubt she entertains that sincere affection for the child which a mother should always feel, and which no merely speculative opinions can materially affect. But, unfortunately, since her separation from her husband, Mrs. Besant has taken upon herself not merely to ignore religion, not merely to believe in no religion, but to publish and avow that non-belief—to become the publisher of pamphlets written by herself, and to deliver lectures composed by herself, stating her disbelief in religion altogether, and stating that she has no belief in the existence of a providence or a God. She has endeavored to convince others, by her lectures and by her pamphlets, that the denial of all religion is a right and proper thing to recommend to mankind at large. It is not necessary for me to express any opinion as to the religious convictions of any one, or even as to their non-religious convictions. But I must, as a man of the world, consider what effect on a woman's position this course of conduct must lead to. I know, and must know as a man of the world, that her course of conduct must quite cut her off, practically, not merely from the sympathy of, but from social intercourse with, the great majority of her sex. I do not believe a single clergyman's wife in England living with her husband would approve of such conduct, or associate with Mrs. Besant; and I must take that into consideration in considering what effect it would have upon the child if brought up by a woman of such reputation. But the matter does not stop there. Not only does Mrs. Besant entertain those opinions which are reprobated by the great mass of mankind—whether rightly or wrongly I have no business to say, though I, of course, think rightly—but she carries those speculative opinions into practice as regards the

education of the child, and from the moment she does that she brings herself within the lines of the decisions of Lord Chancellors and eminent judges with reference to the custody of children by persons holding speculative opinions, and in those cases it has been held that before giving the custody of a child to those who entertain such speculative opinions the Court must consider what effect infusing those opinions as part of its practical education would have upon the child. That is undoubtedly a matter of the greatest importance. Upon this point there is no conflict of testimony whatever. Mrs. Besant herself says that she prohibited the governess from giving any religious education to the child, and has prevented the child from obtaining any religious education at all. When the child went to school—a day school, as I understand—Mrs. Besant prohibited the governess of that school from imparting any religious education, in the same way that she had prohibited the former governess, who was a home governess, from giving any religious education, and Mrs. Besant gave none herself. It is, therefore, not only the entertaining and publishing these opinions, but she considers it her duty so to educate the child as to prevent her having any religious opinions whatever until she attains a proper age. I have no doubt that Mrs. Besant is conscientious in her opinions upon all these matters, but I also have a conscientious opinion, and I am bound to give effect to it. I think such a course of education not only reprehensible but detestable, and likely to work utter ruin to the child, and I certainly should upon this ground alone decide that this child ought not to remain another day under the care of her mother."

As to the publication of the Knowlton pamphlet, Sir George Jessel decided that that also was a good ground for separating mother and child. He committed himself to the shameful statement, so strongly condemned by the Lord Chief Justice, that Dr. Knowlton was in favor of "promiscuous intercourse without marriage", and then uttered the gross falsehood that his view "was exactly the same as was entertained by the Lord Chief Justice of England". After this odious misrepresentation, I was not surprised to hear from him words of brutal insult to myself. I print here an article on him written at the time, not one word of which I now regret, and which I am glad to place on record in permanent form, now that only his memory remains for me to hate.

"SIR GEORGE JESSEL.

"DURING the long struggle which began in March, 1877, no

word has escaped me against the respective judges before whom I have had to plead. Some have been harsh, but, at least, they have been fairly just, and even if a sign of prejudice appeared, it was yet not sufficient to be a scandal to the Bench. Of Sir George Jessel, however, I cannot speak in terms even of respect, for in his conduct towards myself he has been rough, coarse, and unfair, to an extent that I never expected to see in any English judge. Sir George Jessel is subtle and acute, but he is rude, overbearing, and coarse; he has the sneer of a Mephistopheles, mingled with a curious monkeyish pleasure in inflicting pain. Sir George Jessel prides himself on being 'a man of the world', and he expresses the low morality common to that class when the phrase is taken in its worst sense; he holds, like the 'men of the world', who 'see life' in Leicester Square and the Haymarket, that women are kept chaste only through fear and from lack of opportunity; that men may be loose in morals if they will, and that women are divided into two classes for their use—one to be the victims and the toys of the moment, the others to be kept ignorant and strictly guarded, so as to be worthy of being selected as wives. Sir George Jessel considers that a woman becomes an outcast from society because she thinks that women would be happier, healthier, safer, if they had some slight acquaintance with physiology, and were not condemned, through ignorance, to give birth to human lives foredoomed to misery, to disease, and to starvation. Sir George Jessel says that no 'modest woman' will associate with one who spreads among her sex the knowledge which will enable her sisters to limit their families within their means. The old brutal Jewish spirit, regarding women as the mere slaves of men, breaks out in the coarse language which disgraced himself rather than the woman at whom it was aimed. Sir George Jessel might have been surprised, had he been in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester, on the following day, and had seen it filled with men and women, quiet looking, well dressed, and respectable, and had heard the cries of 'Shame on him!' which rang round the hall, when his brutal remark was quoted. Such language only causes a re-action towards the insulted person even among those who would otherwise be antagonistic, and Sir George Jessel has ranged on my side many a woman who, but for him, would have held aloof.

"Sir George Jessel is a Jew; he thinks that a parent should be deprived of a child if he or she withholds from it religious training. Two hundred years ago, Sir George Jessel's children might have been taken from him because he did not bring them up as Christians; Sir George Jessel and his race have been relieved from disabilities, and he now joins the persecuting majority, and deals out to the Atheist the same measure dealt to his forefathers by the Christians. The Master of the Rolls

pretended that by depriving me of my child he was inflicting no punishment on me! If the Master of the Rolls have any children, he must be as hard-hearted in the home as he is on the bench, if he would not feel that any penalty was inflicted on him if his little ones were torn from him and handed over to a Christian priest, who would teach them to despise him as a Jew, and hate him as a denier of Christ. Even now, Jews are under many social disabilities, and even when richly gilt, Christian society looks upon them with thinly-concealed dislike. The old wicked prejudice still survives against them, and it is with shame and with disgust that Liberals see a Jew trying to curry favor with Christian society by reviving the obsolete penalties once inflicted on his own people.

"Sir George Jessel was not only brutally harsh; he was also utterly unfair. He quoted the Lord Chief Justice as agreeing with him in his judgment on Knowlton, on points where the Chief had distinctly expressed the contrary opinion, and he did this not through ignorance, but with the eloquent words of Sir Alexander Cockburn lying in front of him, and after I had pointed out to him, and he had deliberately read, or professed to read, the passages which contained the exact contrary of that which he put into the Chief's mouth.

"Of one thing Sir George Jessel and his Christian friends may be sure: that neither prosecution nor penalty will prevent me from teaching both Atheism and Malthusianism to all who will listen to me, and since Christianity is still so bigoted as to take the child from the mother because of a difference of creed, I will strain every nerve to convert the men and women around me, and more especially the young, to a creed more worthy of humanity.

"Sir George Jessel pretended to have the child's interests at heart: in reality he utterly ignored them. I offered to settle £110 a year on the child if she was placed in the charge of some trustworthy and respectable person, but the Master did not even notice the offer. He takes away the child from plenty and comfort, and throws her into comparative poverty; he takes her away from most tender and watchful care, and places her under the guardianship of a man so reckless of her health, that he chose the moment of her serious illness to ask for her removal; he takes her away from cultured and thoughtful society to place her among half-educated farmers. Nay, he goes further: Dr. Drysdale's affidavit stated that it was absolutely necessary at present that she should have her mother's care; and Sir George Jessel disregards this, and, in her still weak state, drags her from her home and from all she cares for, and throws her into the hands of strangers. If any serious results follow, Sir George Jessel will be morally, though not legally, responsible for them. In her new home she can have

no gentle womanly attendance. No Christian lady of high character will risk the misconstruction to which she would be exposed by living alone at Sibsey Vicarage with a young clergyman who is neither a bachelor nor a widower; the child will be condemned either to solitary neglect at home, or to the cold strictness of a boarding-school. She is bright, gay, intelligent, merry now. What will she be at a year's end? My worst wish for Sir George Jessel is that the measure he has meted out to me may, before he dies, be measured out to him or his."

There is little to add to the story. I gave the child up, as I was compelled to do, and gave notice of appeal to the Court of Appeal against the order of the Master of the Rolls. Meanwhile, as all access to the children was denied me by the father, I gave him notice that unless access were given I would sue for a restitution of conjugal rights, merely for the sake of seeing my children. As the deed of separation had been broken by his action, I supposed that the courts would not permit it to be broken for his advantage while holding it binding on me. Unhappily, at this critical point, my health gave way; the loneliness and silence of the house, of which my darling had always been the sunshine and the music, weighed on me like an evil dream: at night I could not sleep, missing in the darkness the soft breathing of the little child; her cries as she clung to me and was forcibly carried away rang ever in my ears; at last, on July 25th, I was suddenly struck down with fever, and had the rest of pain and delirium instead of the agony of conscious loss. While I was lying there prostrate an order was served on me from the Master of the Rolls, granted on Mr. Besant's application, to restrain me from bringing any suit against him. As soon as I recovered, I took steps for contesting this order, but no definite action could be taken until after the Long Vacation. The case came on for hearing first in November, 1878, and then in January, 1879. All access to the children had been denied me, and the money due to me had been withheld. By this my opponent had put himself so completely in the wrong that even the Master of the Rolls uttered words of severe condemnation of the way in which I had been treated. Then a curious interlude took place. The Master of the Rolls advised me to file a counter-claim for divorce or for judicial separation, and I gladly agreed to do so, feeling very doubtful as to the

Master of the Rolls' power to do anything of the kind, but very glad that he should think he had the authority. While the claim was being prepared, I obtained access to the children under an interim order, as well as the money owing to me, and at the end of March the case again came before the Master of the Rolls. The claim filed alleged distinct acts of cruelty, and I brought witnesses to support the claim, among them the doctor who had attended me during my married life. Mr. Ince filed an answer of general denial, adding that the acts of cruelty, if any, were "done in the heat of the moment". He did not, however, venture to contest the case, although I tendered myself for cross-examination, but pleaded the deed of separation as a bar to further proceedings on my part; I argued on the other hand that as the deed had been broken by the plaintiff's act, all my original rights revived. Sir George Jessel held that the deed of separation condoned all that had gone before it, if it was raised as a bar to further proceedings, and expressed his regret that he had not known there would be "any objection on the other side", when he advised a claim for a judicial separation. On the final hearing of the case in April in the Rolls' Court Sir George Jessel decided that the deed of separation was good as protecting Mr. Besant from any suit on my part to obtain a decree for the restitution of conjugal rights, although it had been set aside on the one matter of value to me—the custody of my child. The net result of the proceedings was that had I gone to the Divorce Court in 1873, I might at least have obtained a divorce *a mensa e thoro*; that in my desire to avoid publicity, and content in what I believed to be secure possession of my child, I had agreed to a deed which fully protected Mr. Besant against any action on my part, but which could be set aside by him for the purpose of robbing me of my child.

The argument in the Court of Appeal came on during April, and was, as I expected, decided against me, the absolute right of the father being declared, and a married mother held to have no sort of claim over her own children. The worst stigma affixed to marriage by the law of England is this ignoring of any right of the married mother to her child; the law protects the unmarried, but insults the married, mother, and places in the hands of the legal

husband an instrument of torture whose power to agonise depends on the tenderness and strength of the motherliness of the wife. In fact the law says to every woman: "Choose which of these two positions you will have: if you are legally your husband's wife you can have no legal claim to your children; if legally you are your husband's mistress, then your rights as mother are secure".

But one thing I gained in the Court of Appeal. The Court expressed a strong view as to my right of access, and directed me to apply to Sir George Jessel for it, stating that it could not doubt that he would give it. I made the application and obtained an order of access to the children, seeing them alone, once a month; of a visit of the children to London twice a year, with their governess, for a week each time; of a week at the seaside in similar fashion once a year; of a weekly letter from each of them with the right of reply. This order, obtained after such long struggle, has proved useless. The monthly visit so upset my poor little daughter, and made her fret so constantly after me, that in mercy to her I felt compelled to relinquish it; on the first visit to the seaside, I was saddled with the cost of maintaining the Rev. Mr. and Mrs. Child, who were placed as guardians of the children, and who treated me in their presence as though I were a dangerous animal from whom they were to be protected. To give but an instance of the sort of treatment I received, I wished Mabel to have the benefit of sea-bathing, and was told that she could not be allowed to bathe with me, and this with a suggestiveness that sorely taxed my self-control. I could not apply to the Court against the ingenious forms of petty insult employed, while I felt that they must inevitably estrange the children from me if practised always in their presence. After a vain appeal that some sort of consideration should be shown to me, an appeal answered by a mocking suggestion that I should complain to the Master of the Rolls, I made up my mind as to my future course. I resolved neither to see nor to write to my children until they were old enough to understand and to judge for themselves, and I know that I shall win my daughter back in her womanhood, though I have been robbed of her childhood. By effacing myself then, I saved her from a constant and painful struggle unfitted for childhood's passionate feelings, and left her only a memory that she

loves, undefaced by painful remembrances of her mother insulted in her presence.

Unhappily Sir George Jessel has terribly handicapped her future; left to me she would have had the highest education now open to girls; left to her present guardian she receives only fifth-rate teaching, utterly unfitted for the present day. Twice I have offered to bear the whole expense of her education in the High School at Cheltenham, or in some London College, without in any way appearing in the matter, but each time my offer has been roughly and insultingly refused, and the influence that marred the mother's life is undermining the future happiness of the child's. But I am not without hope that I may be able to obtain from the Court of Chancery an order for the benefit of its ward, and I trust before very long that I shall be able to insure to my child an education which will fit her to play her part worthily when she reaches womanhood. I had hoped to save her from the pain of rejecting a superstitious faith, but that is now impossible, and she must fight her way out of darkness into light as her mother did before her. But in order that she may do so, education now is of vital importance, and that I am striving to obtain for her. I live in the hope that in her womanhood she may return to the home she was torn from in her childhood, and that, in faithful work and noble endeavor, she may wear in future years in the Freethought ranks a name not wholly unloved or unhonored therein, for the sake of the woman who has borne it in the van through eleven years of strife.

THE END.

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